

UNITED NATIONS
General Assembly
FORTY-SIXTH SESSION
Official Records

THIRD COMMITTEE
17th meeting
held on
Monday, 21 October 1991
at 3 p.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 17th MEETING

Chairman:

Mr. AL-SHAALI

(United Arab Emirates)

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ORGANIZATION OF WORK

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Distr. GENERAL
A/C.3/46/SR.17
28 October 1991

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 95: ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN (continued) (A/46/3 (chap. VI, sect. D), 38, 77, 325, 344, 377, 439, 462, 491, 501/Rev.1)

1. Mr. URTAZUN (Spain) stressed the need to strengthen cooperation by the United Nations system with the Commission on the Status of Women on the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies. The holding of annual inter-agency meetings was an appropriate way to conduct preparatory work for the Commission's sessions and the 1995 World Conference on Women. The question of disabled women had been dealt with effectively by the Commission, the Economic and Social Council and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The question of refugee women and children and migrant women required special attention and should be considered as a major agenda item at the World Conference in view of the large number of refugee and displaced women.
2. The strategy to be adopted on cooperation for development must take into consideration its impact on women. The basic objective of social integration programmes in developing countries should be to promote greater social tolerance and respect for cultural pluralism in order to eradicate behaviour based on racism and xenophobia. The needs of migrant, refugee and displaced women should also be taken into account in drawing up policies in that field. Lastly, he stressed the important commitment undertaken by the United Nations in approving the convening of the 1995 World Conference on Women. Strong support by all concerned was needed in order to give further impetus to the implementation of the Nairobi Strategies.
3. Mr. KALPAGE (Sri Lanka) said that by the year 2000, the number of women in the world was expected to be just over 3 billion, almost 80 per cent of whom would be in developing countries. Women would contribute increasingly to economic growth and should be given all possible assistance to become equal partners with men. Before full equality was achieved, however, a whole range of socio-cultural and economic barriers must be overcome. Such changes would not occur unless it was widely understood that failure to promote the advancement of women was unproductive as well as unjust. Trade unions, media organizations and educational institutions could play an effective role in ensuring that women had broad access to education, training and health services.
4. Sri Lanka had been focusing increased attention on the situation of women. A Ministry of Women's Affairs and a Women's Bureau had been established to initiate and coordinate programmes for the further advancement of women, and a number of non-governmental organizations were engaged in promoting the interests of women. Owing to measures taken to provide free education and health services, scholarships and food programmes, educational and health indicators showed that gender disparities in Sri Lanka were minimal. In fact, existing inequalities were due more to socio-economic factors than to gender.

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(Mr. Kalpagé, Sri Lanka)

5. Health services had been extended throughout the country in the past four decades through a network of maternal and child health-care centres and hospitals. Demographic data indicated that gender disparities were not significant in mortality rates. Sri Lankan women, who had traditionally been co-producers in agriculture and domestic industries, had been integrated into the economy. The emancipation of women had begun with the granting of universal adult franchise in 1931, followed by fundamental changes in education. Sri Lankan women held high positions in administration as well as in social and political fields.

6. The Constitution guaranteed equality of opportunity to all citizens, irrespective of gender. His country had ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and submitted periodic reports to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The Centre for Women's Research in Sri Lanka carried out extensive research and training for women and disseminated information for the advancement of women.

7. The country's poverty-alleviation programme sought to provide assistance to women in the poorest sector of the population. Extensive housing programmes had improved the status of women and the quality of family life. Numerous changes had been made in the law in order to accelerate the advancement of women. The full participation of women could be achieved primarily by promoting their advancement in the rural sector, which accounted for 75 per cent of the total population and included the most disadvantaged groups. Accordingly, national efforts currently focused on providing health and education services to the poorer sectors with special emphasis on less developed regions. A charter for women was being drafted in order to lay down national policy directives on women's employment, health care and education. A national commission for women would be established to monitor the implementation of those directives.

8. Ms. RAYMOND (Canada) said that the publication The World's Women: 1970-1990, which provided a wealth of statistics designed to show how conditions were changing for women, underscored the sad reality that women had not attained full equality with men anywhere in the world. Her delegation remained concerned about the large number of reservations to the Convention. Canada, like many States parties, had expressed a reservation, which dealt with equal pay for work of equal value. Her Government, however, had recently reviewed that reservation and would soon be in a position to withdraw it. She hoped that other States parties would consider doing likewise in order to strengthen the effectiveness of the Convention.

9. Canada continued to attach importance to improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat and believed that the United Nations must be a leader in the recruitment and appointment of women to decision-making positions. She welcomed the initial research carried out in evaluating the obstacles to the improvement of the status of women called for under General Assembly

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(Ms. Raymond, Canada)

resolution 45/125 and looked forward to receiving the final report on that question at the forty-seventh session.

10. She emphasized her country's strong support for UNIFEM, which should be commended for improving its programme-delivery rate in the past year. Effective national machinery was essential for achieving equality for women. The action called for under Economic and Social Council resolution 1991/22 provided practical approaches to strengthening national machinery and would result in concrete gains for women around the world. Canada welcomed the adoption of Council resolution 1991/18, on violence against women in all its forms. That problem was so widespread that steps must be taken to safeguard under international law the right of women to live free from fear of violence.

11. The elimination of violence against women was a priority issue for Canada. Her Government had recently set up a special panel to promote a national dialogue on that subject. The panel would examine all aspects of the question in order to heighten public awareness and seek solutions to the root causes of the problem, focusing on preventive measures.

12. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992 would be a major international event and women must play a key role in the holding of and follow-up to the Conference. Women had a unique and vital perspective on strategies for achieving sustainable development and must be given every opportunity to participate fully in policy formulation and decision-making. Their economic, social and environmental contributions to sustainable development should be addressed as a distinct topic at the Conference.

13. The World Conference on Women to be held in 1995 would give further impetus to the implementation of the Strategies. Accordingly, it was important to develop effective mechanisms for reporting on and measuring progress made. She hoped that the Commission on the Status of Women would address that question in its preparations for the Conference. Canada also attached great importance to a non-governmental organization forum related to the Conference. Lastly, she pointed out that the Commission had many important issues before it and work on them must not slacken as preparations for the Conference intensified.

14. Mr. GHAREKHAN (India) said that his Government was carrying out a basic strategy for the advancement of women that included economic empowerment by teaching skills, integrating health and educational services for women, and enhancing awareness of women's rights among women's groups and in governmental and non-governmental organizations. India considered women's employment essential to improving their status and sought to make women aware of their rights and provide them with income-generating skills. Specific self-employment programmes had been devised and quotas for women existed in all major employment schemes in the country.

(Mr. Gharekhan, India)

15. His country's programmes for the economic empowerment of women aimed at improving their access to training and credit, extending market support to self-employed women and reserving quotas for women in major employment-generation schemes. India had increased its expenditures on employment programmes for women throughout its seventh five-year plan, which had ended in 1990. In 1992 his Government's allocation for creating employment opportunities would increase by almost 35 per cent. One district in each state in India had been identified for establishing integrated women's development projects. The National Commission on Women had been set up in 1990 to act as a court of inquiry to ensure justice for women and monitor the Government's performance in that regard. His country was keenly aware of the entrenched nature of the problem and was determined to enhance awareness of it.

16. The report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Strategies (A/46/439) referred to the integration of women in development. His delegation felt that further consideration should be given to the implications of evaluating the different approaches in terms of their success from the perspective of both donors and developing-country recipients. The report also made reference to a seminar to be held in Vienna in December 1991 to evaluate the concept of women in development and define new challenges. He wished to know whether any Governments of developing countries would participate in that exercise. If not, a crucial perspective would be missing. India had doubts about the advisability of a gender perspective on issues related to the environment since it was somewhat difficult to make automatic assumptions about gender-differentiated decision-making on environmental issues. In that connection, he stressed the importance of ensuring that the perspective of women was fully integrated into macro-level planning. Lastly, his Government commended the work of UNIFEM and would continue to support its activities.

17. Mrs. ALVAREZ (Dominican Republic) said that the position of elderly women, which was both precarious and rarely addressed in most societies, would probably become more perilous in the near future. All demographic projections indicated that the proportion of women would increase in the coming decades, especially in the developing countries, and the small proportion of resources at the disposal of elderly women was therefore alarming.

18. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women did not specifically mention older women, since the issue had not yet been recognized at the time of the adoption of the Convention, and the United Nations had adopted only one resolution on that important social group. Among the many recommendations to improve the status of women set forth in the Nairobi Strategies, only one touched even superficially on elderly women. The inadequacy of previous inquiries into their situation had been recognized by INSTRAW.

19. According to United Nations projections, the percentage of women over 60 living in the third world would increase from about 50 per cent to 70 per cent

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(Mrs. Alvarez, Dominican Republic)

by the year 2025. In turn, 70 per cent of such elderly third-world women would live in poverty in rural areas. Currently, the vast majority of older women in developing countries were illiterate, poor, socially dependent and lacking in personal resources to cope with changing social conditions. That situation often resulted from a tendency to devote scarce resources primarily to the health, nutrition and education of boys and men, who were seen as the productive members of the family.

20. There was a high proportion of widows and unmarried women in the developing nations, especially in Africa and Asia. Moreover, the increasing migration to the cities and the breakdown of the extended family was depriving older women of their traditional support. Yet social-security systems in the third world were grossly inadequate. Consensual unions prevalent in many countries deprived elderly unmarried women from government benefits which they might otherwise have received through husbands. Pensions were not available to workers in the rural and informal sectors, which employed more women than men.

21. Older women should be viewed not as recipients of welfare but as agents of development for themselves and for society. A recent meeting of experts in Vienna on ageing women and development had yielded ample evidence that older women could contribute to development, and its conclusions and recommendations would be used as background documents at the 1992 session of the Commission on the Status of Women. Although women's needs would represent an ever-increasing part of the problem of ageing, the immediate adoption of realistic measures to help older women help themselves and society would allow them to become an ever-increasing part of the solution.

22. Mr. SIDDIQUI (Bangladesh) said that the decline of ideological conflict had made it possible to focus on the human dimension of global development strategy, of which the advancement of women was unquestionably a primary component. However, despite the importance of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and of the Nairobi Strategies, they could not be meaningful without a political commitment to implement their recommendations.

23. Efforts to promote women's advancement must address the fact that two thirds of the world's illiterate population were women, that traditional social customs and myths often kept them confined to the household, that national statistics underrepresented or omitted their contributions to the economy, particularly in rural areas of developing countries, and that the nutritional and health-care needs of many women in developing countries were given low priority. Also essential were effective and well coordinated planned-parenthood programmes that promoted an awareness of shared responsibility in men and women, particularly in countries where overpopulation hindered development. While Governments were responsible for strengthening national machinery to fight discrimination against women, which was accentuated by the adverse economic conditions in developing countries, the effective implementation of programmes in such countries largely depended on international assistance in both funding and training.

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(Mr. Siddiqui, Bangladesh)

24. Until they were fully integrated into the mainstream of society, women must be given special and even preferential guarantees. National laws concerning violence against women should be strengthened and their application ensured; abandoned women and unmarried mothers should be given special assistance and access to legal aid so that they could seek redress for any wrongs against them; and trafficking in women, which was on the rise in many developing countries, should be combated through international cooperation.

25. Although the general status of women in Bangladesh was not ideal, he was proud to note that the country's Prime Minister was a woman, chosen in a free election. The Prime Minister had established a task force under the Ministry for Women's Affairs to elaborate a comprehensive plan for women's advancement, and her personal commitment to the issue heralded a brighter future for the women of Bangladesh.

26. The country's multisectoral approach sought to reduce gender imbalances in such sectors as education, health, family planning and employment, with particular attention to the needs of disabled, destitute, widowed, elderly and socially handicapped women and female heads of households. Under the country's current five-year plan, the proportion of women employed in the public sector was to be increased from 6 per cent to 15 per cent, inter alia, through the establishment of employment quotas, child-care centres and training centres; female literacy raised from 15 per cent to 30 per cent; and women's nutrition and access to medical services improved.

27. Since most women in Bangladesh lived in rural areas, its rural development programmes focused on the welfare of rural women. With the support of non-governmental organizations, the Government was trying to integrate women into rural development as both active agents and beneficiaries, inter alia, by facilitating their access to education, credit and training.

28. Legal reforms to improve their status included measures to combat oppression and violence against women, as well as the reservation of 30 seats in Parliament for women, the remaining seats being open to female candidates in elections. However, there was still a large gap between de jure and de facto equality. The Government was therefore using the mass media and educational materials to project positive images of women, and had set up legal aid units to provide free legal advice to poor women.

29. For the integration of women in development, enhanced cooperation was needed between Governments and United Nations funding agencies such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UNIFEM. The research and training facilities of INSTRAW would also be of value. Women should also play a central role in environmental activities, and studies on that subject should focus on the poverty and population aspects of environmental degradation and pollution.

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(Mr. Siddiqui, Bangladesh)

30. In view of the current world-wide trend towards democratization, the involvement of women in promoting international cooperation, peace and disarmament was particularly important. Women could no longer be relegated to arbitrarily defined women's issues. Therefore, women's concerns should be integrated into forthcoming international conferences, such as the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights and the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development, all of which would provide valuable inputs for the 1995 World Conference on Women.

31. Mr. RALEBITSO (Lesotho) said that, since the advancement of women encountered similar obstacles throughout the developing world, a concerted effort by the developing nations was necessary. Lesotho had signed the Convention in 1980, and was about to ratify it. In addition, legal measures had been enacted to ensure equal opportunity in education, employment and economic, social and cultural life. A private organization known as the Federation of Women Lawyers had been established to inform women of their legal rights in such areas as marriage, property and land. However, the equal opportunity enjoyed by women in the public sector was not yet a reality in the private sector, although Lesotho had attempted to redress that situation through legislation on wage structure, maternity leave and pensions. The access of women to decision-making positions also remained a problem. In that regard, he thanked UNIFEM for its financial and technical support for the training of Lesotho women in agriculture, marketing, nutrition and other fields, and hoped that UNIFEM, along with INSTRAW, UNDP, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and other organizations, would increase its assistance to Lesotho.

32. The possibility for women in Lesotho with viable project proposals to obtain, in their own right, land and commercial-bank loans, was a step towards legal equality. However, some provisions in both statutory and customary law still adversely affected women and therefore needed reform. In that regard, he endorsed the recommendation of the Commission on the Status of Women that Governments, together with non-governmental organizations, should promote awareness of women's rights through formal and informal education and the mass media. Governments should also promote the training of teachers on gender issues to combat stereotyping.

33. He was concerned that, on average, only 3.5 per cent of the ministerial positions in Governments were held by women. To remedy that situation, women's qualifications should be enhanced through confidence-building measures and the provision of flexible working conditions, including the review of job specifications, so that women would be adequately represented at all levels of the administrative hierarchy of governmental and non-governmental organizations.

34. The integration of women in development depended largely on joint international efforts and the sharing of experiences. He appreciated the work

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(Mr. Ralebitso, Lesotho)

of the Division for the Advancement of Women and UNIFEM in that area. In developing countries, the economic crisis and many of the structural-adjustment policies designed to redress it had particularly affected women, as existing inequalities were exacerbated by unbalanced socio-economic structures. The Lesotho Government had taken measures to modify its economic and social structure with a view to enhancing women's recovery and sustaining their advancement in those areas, as a precondition for sound development. Women must be seen not as victims of development but as principal agents in that process.

35. His delegation looked forward to the 1995 World Conference on Women and reaffirmed its support for China's invitation to host the Conference. He trusted that the Conference would give new impetus to the implementation of the Nairobi Strategies.

36. Mr. BLACKMAN (Barbados) said that his delegation supported the priority themes of equality, development and peace as the major focus of the work of the latest session of the Commission on the Status of Women. While advances had been made towards eliminating legal discrimination against women, it continued in practice in all countries, regardless of level of development, and the Commission must therefore continue to focus on de facto inequality.

37. Development and the advancement of women were inextricably linked, and the integration of women in development was essential to implementing the Strategies. In that regard, his delegation welcomed the convening of a seminar to be held in Vienna in December 1991 to evaluate the concept of women in development.

38. Concerning the report on the operational activities for development and the advancement of women (A/46/491), his delegation commended UNIFEM for its work in the Participatory Action Programme for Latin America and the Caribbean, designed to stimulate participation by Caribbean women in development, particularly at the grass-roots level. Barbados also supported the global programmes and initiatives of UNIFEM, in particular the consultative visits involving Governments, non-governmental organizations and women's organizations, and hoped that the programme could be extended to the countries of the Caribbean.

39. His Government had always regarded the role of INSTRAW as pivotal to the improvement of the status of women. Concerning the Institute's report (A/46/325), his delegation supported country-specific research, particularly concerning women in the informal sector. It applauded the convening of the consultative meeting on a "Macro-economic Policy Analysis of Women's Participation in the Informal Sector" and supported the collaborative project between INSTRAW and the regional commissions on women's involvement in the informal sector. In that context, it was to be hoped that the interregional consultation on women in public life, postponed from September 1991, would be rescheduled in the near future. His delegation regarded the INSTRAW programme

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(Mr. Blackman, Barbados)

of integrating gender and development issues in university curricula as an important initiative for promoting gender sensitivity in future development planning.

40. Barbados had ratified the Convention, and its combined first and second periodic reports would be considered by CEDAW at its next session. His Government supported general recommendations 16, 17 and, in particular, 18 (A/46/38, para. 1). The Committee and similar monitoring bodies must receive the requisite resources to function, and Barbados therefore welcomed the Secretary-General's review of resources to ensure adequate support of that Committee and effective implementation of all other aspects of the programme on the advancement of women, as called for in General Assembly resolution 45/129; it was to be hoped that the provision in the proposed programme budget for 1992-1993 would strengthen support for the Committee. His delegation awaited the formulation of a system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women for the period 1996-2001, with particular attention to the strengthening of national machinery for the advancement of women and to specific sectoral themes that cut across the three objectives, equality, development and peace.

41. The information in tables 1 and 2 of the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Nairobi Strategies (A/46/439) was disappointing. The targets for the recruitment of women to senior posts were still attainable, and the Secretary-General must continue his efforts to fulfil the mandate in General Assembly resolution 45/129 and Economic and Social Council resolution 1991/17, giving special attention to female candidates from unrepresented and underrepresented developing countries.

42. Mrs. BANGOURA (Guinea) said that her Government attached great importance to the advancement of women, an issue which was closely linked to economic growth, and in that regard it welcomed the report of CEDAW (A/46/38). Her delegation was also pleased that a growing number of States had become parties to the Convention. Guinea supported the United Nations programme for the 1992-1993 biennium, which called for the holding of regional or subregional seminars on the Convention.

43. Legislation had been adopted in Guinea to ensure the equality of sexes. Women in Guinea were subject to no discrimination with regard to access to private property, social security, education, employment, the civil service or private enterprise. Many women's groups had been created within cooperative, commercial and industrial organizations. Together with UNICEF and UNDP, in September 1991 her Government had held a meeting to consider the creation of national mechanisms for the integration of women in the democratization and development of Guinea. Two national institutions had been established: the General Directorate for the Promotion of Women and Children and the Federation of Women's Associations of Guinea.

(Mrs. Bangoura, Guinea)

44. Her delegation was concerned that the Convention was not being fully implemented. Furthermore, economic and social crises continued to affect women more than men.

45. Her delegation was disturbed about the obstacles to implementation and follow-up of the Nairobi Strategies, as set out in document A/46/439. The objectives must be treated as a matter of priority. Inequalities remained in the areas of education, working conditions and access to the means of production and decision-making bodies, regardless of the level of development of the country concerned. Development being one of the objectives of the Strategies, it was essential to combat malnutrition, the high birth rate and illiteracy and to broaden access to social services, particularly health care for children.

46. For the full integration of women in development, Governments must create conditions to incorporate women's activities in investment plans. To that end, activities for women must envisage appropriate financing. Women also had an important role to play in averting armed conflicts, because they could teach their children tolerance and understanding.

47. Her delegation welcomed the decision to hold the 1995 World Conference on Women. It was to be hoped that the Conference would take decisions on further promoting the advancement of women. Guinea also appreciated the report of INSTRAW (A/46/325) and supported the programmes planned with regard to the work of women in the informal sector, particularly in rural areas. In the view of her delegation, one persistent problem was that women, and African women in particular, had no access to credit. Guinea praised the efforts of UNIFEM, which made a direct contribution to women in rural areas and women living in poverty.

48. Her delegation approved the recommendations on the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat and hoped that particular attention would be paid to the underrepresentation of women from developing countries, and African women in particular, at the senior level.

49. Mr. WAN HANAFIAH (Malaysia) said that his Government was committed to mobilizing the participation of women in all aspects of development. To that end, a national policy for women had been formulated to ensure equitable sharing of resources and information as well as access to development opportunities and benefits for both men and women and to integrate women in all sectors of national development, so as to improve the quality of life and eradicate poverty and illiteracy.

50. Malaysian women's participation rate in the labour force had increased markedly, from 37 per cent in 1970 to 46 per cent in 1990. In manufacturing, women had accounted for 24 per cent of the total female employment in 1990 as compared to a mere 8 per cent in 1970. In the services sector, female employment had increased from 16 per cent in 1970 to 21 per cent in 1990. The

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(Mr. Wan Hanafiah, Malaysia)

same pattern could be found in all other sectors, except for agriculture, which had seen a sharp decline of female employment, a clear sign of the absorption of women into the mainstream of economic activities.

51. Any effort to integrate women in development must begin by improving literacy, and equal opportunity in education for women was firmly anchored in Malaysia's national policy. The efforts made had resulted in a marked increase in the proportion of women who had attained a desirable literacy level and who had received university-level professional and technical training.

52. He noted from the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the Nairobi Strategies (A/46/439) that considerable progress had been made in eradicating discrimination against women, but all countries must step up their efforts. In Malaysia, the principle of equal rights for women was anchored in the Constitution, and legislation had been adopted in many areas to guarantee women's rights.

53. Malaysia shared the concern expressed by the Commission on the Status of Women on the slow progress made in implementing the Strategies, and it was to be hoped that the 1995 World Conference on Women would help remedy that situation. To that end, it was essential to involve Member States and the relevant United Nations and other international bodies in preparing the Conference. Regional meetings should be a part of such efforts, with the participation of both public and private sectors, including the relevant non-governmental organizations.

54. Malaysia fully appreciated the plight of rural women; although instrumental in food production in the developing countries, they were often denied credit and technical assistance simply because they were not officially classified as agents of production. That misconception must be corrected.

55. Malaysia had recently hosted a regional consultation with a view to raising global awareness of the significant economic contributions of poor rural women to national output, household food security and the economic well-being of the family. A series of recommendations and a plan of action had been drawn up for submission to the Summit on the Economic Advancement of Rural Women, to be held in Brussels in February 1992 (Economic and Social Council resolution 1991/64).

56. His delegation appreciated the Secretary-General's report on the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat (A/46/377) and looked forward to the action programme for 1991-1995.

57. Mr. Jong Moo CHOI (Republic of Korea) said that the status of women had changed little in many regions of the world. It was a cause for disappointment that some of the Forward-looking Strategies had yet to be implemented. Achieving equality for women in all areas of society would

(Mr. Jong Moo Choi, Republic of Korea)

require changes not only in legal instruments, but in daily practices as well. The lot of women depended to a large degree on national culture and attitudes, some of them deeply ingrained. Although over 100 States had acceded to the Convention, women's rights had only partially become a reality in the daily lives of women in many countries. Women must therefore be made aware of their rights through public information campaigns. He hoped that the Commission on the Status of Women would continue to identify specific areas of divergence between de jure and de facto treatment of women.

58. His country had supported Economic and Social Council resolution 1991/18, which had addressed the problem of domestic violence. He stressed the importance of education in that regard. In the Republic of Korea, the ratio of secondary-school leavers entering university had increased to 31 per cent by 1990. Thus, Korean women could realize their potential and participate even more actively in the social and political development of their country. Experience had shown that, with the proper education, women could acquire the means of social advancement.

59. General Assembly resolution 45/126 highlighted the fundamental need for women's literacy and education, which would facilitate their expanded involvement in development. It was also necessary to intensify women's electoral influence on political structures, which were sometimes indifferent to their needs. Democracy had given new meaning to the individual's vote, and women therefore constituted a powerful political force. In the Republic of Korea, after decades of persistence, the influence of women on political and electoral bodies had resulted in major advances.

60. His Government also looked forward to increased participation of women in such bodies as the Commission on the Status of Women and the United Nations Secretariat in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1991/17. In compliance with General Assembly resolution 45/129, his Government had already enacted various measures in implementation of the Forward-looking Strategies. To integrate women into national development, a women's sector had been included in the current five-year development plan. His Government would continue to cooperate with the international community in fulfilling the goal of a world of equality, development and peace for women.

61. Ms. RAYNATOU (Niger) said that the advancement of women was now recognized as essential to the development of society as a whole. The Niger had welcomed the Forward-looking Strategies, but noted that equality between men and women was still far from a reality, and in many countries women had few options besides marriage and motherhood.

62. A high proportion of women in the Niger were young and/or illiterate. In addition to educating children and maintaining traditions, they were active in farming, handicrafts, the fight against desertification and trade. Nevertheless, because of numerous taboos and social prejudices, their true importance went unrecognized. In an effort to integrate women into

(Ms. Raynatou, Niger)

development, her Government had established a number of specialized institutions for the advancement of women. Its 1987-1991 development plan provided for women's more active participation in economic, political and social life. Yet, despite the Government's efforts, supported by United Nations assistance and bilateral cooperation, women remained confined to menial work, particularly in rural areas, and were largely uninvolved in decision-making.

63. Despite women's significant contribution in agriculture, they lacked access to land and other means of production, credit and training. In support of women's economic activities, her Government had encouraged women's associations and income-generating projects. But women were underrepresented in all modern sectors of the economy, and social security was also inadequate. Despite significant efforts to improve the health of women and children by expanding the number of clinics and launching vaccination and family-planning campaigns, their situation remained precarious and was further affected by difficult socio-economic conditions. Desertification and the resulting mass exodus of men from rural areas had greatly increased women's social and economic burdens.

64. In general, the basic domestic law of the Niger and the international instruments it had ratified guaranteed women the full enjoyment of their rights, but many obstacles remained in practice. Most sources of law, such as the civil code, Islamic law and customary law, blocked the full enjoyment of their rights. In the political area, women had made some gains in representation in recent years, however.

65. In implementation of the Forward-looking Strategies, the Government had recently formulated a policy for the advancement which recognized the important role of women in development, full enjoyment of their rights, access to means of production, information and education and removal of any obstacles hindering their contribution to development. The policy was based on equality and equal opportunity, non-discrimination and respect for the rights of women both as citizens and partners in development. Increased assistance from international organizations would be needed to put that policy on a solid footing.

66. Current international economic relations were, in themselves, a serious obstacle to the more effective use of material and human resources necessary for more rapid improvement of the quality of life in developing countries, particularly in remedying women's lack of progress in relation to men. The United Nations should stress that resources freed from the arms race must be devoted to the economic and social development of developing countries.

67. Mrs. OGUNLEYE (Nigeria) said that the status of women could not be fully enhanced nor their integration into development achieved if the gap between discrimination in law and in practice was not closed. But unless the level of women's awareness and education was not significantly raised, discrimination

(Mrs. Ogunleye, Nigeria)

against women in practice could not be eradicated by the enactment of non-discriminatory laws. She hoped that the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights would accord priority to the vulnerability of women in practical discrimination and to violence against women.

68. The advancement of women also had a moral component emphasizing their vulnerability. Their unwitting implication in criminal activities deserved serious attention: unless they achieved sufficient advancement, the temptation to succumb to such activities as drug abuse and drug trafficking would always be there. Women should be made aware of their vital role in the preservation of the family. More awareness programmes for women to supplement the efforts of UNIFEM and INSTRAW were needed at the national level.

69. It was surprising that the Secretary-General's report on the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat (A/46/377) showed that progress to date had been imperceptible. Her delegation was hopeful, however, that greater efforts would be made to meet the 1995 projections for the participation rate of women in positions of high responsibility.

70. In anticipation of the next session of the Commission on the Status of Women and the 1995 World Conference on Women, it should be borne in mind that the achievement of gender equality, the reduction of the gap between de jure and de facto discrimination, greater integration of women in development and respect for their moral status should continue to be issues of global concern.

71. Ms. de MIRANDA (Suriname) said that her Government was of the view that full and equal participation of women was of great importance to the country's economic and social development; but owing to the adverse economic situation, the majority of women still could not fully participate in that process. The new Government would do its utmost to promote the social emancipation of women and would formulate a balanced women's policy. Many women heading households had been forced to create their own employment in the informal sector, but the Government had realized that their efforts could be more productive if channelled into the rehabilitation of the national economy. It intended to provide them access to necessary skills and means of production and credit, and would welcome any assistance from relevant United Nations agencies.

72. Her Government was firmly committed to the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, and the Constitution contained provisions to that effect. Suriname was not yet party to the Convention, but was taking steps to achieve the necessary standards for accession in the near future.

73. The deadline for implementation of the Nairobi Strategies was fast approaching, and it was regrettable that, despite some progress, many obstacles remained. Her delegation welcomed the scheduled 1995 World Conference on Women, which would provide an opportunity to review and appraise the goals of the Strategies and would again focus global attention on the situation of women. The intervening period must therefore be used for setting standards to further promote the advancement of women.

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(Ms. de Miranda, Suriname)

74. With regard to the priority areas identified by the Commission on the Status of Women - equality, development and peace - her delegation was focusing on equality by attempting to eliminate de jure and de facto discrimination against women. It regretted that the interregional consultation on women in public life had been postponed for lack of funds, since it would have provided an opportunity to address the current disparity between men and women in the political system.

75. For the purposes of economic development and progress, utilization of women's full potential in all areas of society should be a basic objective. Her Government had realized that improvement of women's literacy, technical skills, health care and access to economic resources would greatly advance their contribution. A National Centre for Women's Affairs had been established to facilitate their integration into all mainstream development activities.

76. The recent world-wide movement towards democratic forms of government offered hope that the goal of peace would finally be achieved. Democracy also offered the best chance for men and women to develop their full potential, as it encouraged respect for human rights.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

77. Mr. KRENKEL (Austria) said that he spoke on behalf of the 20 States which had sponsored Economic and Social Council resolution 1991/16, adopted by consensus. The only operative paragraph of that resolution had requested the Secretary-General to add specific recommendations, within the overall level of the budget of the Organization, to the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993 to strengthen and rationalize the resources of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs. At that time, the Secretary-General had not commented on the request, and had said that it fell under the mandate of the Fifth Committee through the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ). CPC had discussed the issue at its thirty-first session, and had submitted the necessary proposals to the Secretariat.

78. To date, however, no report from the Secretary-General containing proposals or recommendations had been received. Policy and resource questions could not be separated, since they were mutually dependent. Therefore, he wondered whether the Secretariat had prepared a report offering specific recommendations, and if so, when it would be available. He would also like to know to which Committee it would be submitted and the reason for its late issuance.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.

UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly
FORTY-SIXTH SESSION
Official Records

THIRD COMMITTEE
18th meeting
held on
Tuesday, 22 October 1991
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 18th MEETING

Chairman:

Mr. AL-SHAALI

(United Arab Emirates)

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AGENDA ITEM 95: ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN (continued)

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Distr. GENERAL
A/C.3/46/SR.18
7 November 1991
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: FRENCH

91-56702 5088S (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 95: ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN (continued) (A/46/3 (chap. IV, sect. D), 38, 77, 325, 344, 377, 439, 462, 491 and 501/Rev.1)

1. Mr. SIDDIG (Sudan) said that, as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women met his country's aspirations with regard to the emancipation of Sudanese women, the Sudan would soon ratify it. He drew attention to the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2000 (A/46/439), which testified to the efforts made to achieve the targeted goals despite the existing obstacles, and stressed the need for continued struggle against persisting discriminatory practices with a view to their ultimate eradication.

2. The problems addressed in the report of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (A/46/38), including limited resources and the duplication of work, could be overcome only through the concerted efforts of the international community. It was encouraging to note the measures adopted by the United Nations treaty bodies, as mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General (A/46/462).

3. In the Sudan, despite the official prohibition of all forms of discrimination against women, they were still disadvantaged in comparison with men.

4. The integration of women in development had become an issue at the top of the international agenda. Women must become partners in development, in which they could play a catalytic role, and no longer merely its beneficiaries. However, women were among those most adversely affected by the overall economic crisis generated by debt and by deteriorating terms of trade. His delegation shared the view of the Secretary-General, expressed in document A/46/439, that the issue must be approached from the perspective of both donors and developing countries and must be reflected both in national development programmes and in international development activities.

5. Recalling that, in resolution 45/124, paragraph 8, the General Assembly had welcomed the initiatives taken, in accordance with general recommendation No. 11 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, to provide training and information seminars for States considering acceding to the Convention, his delegation advocated the convening of a regional information seminar for Africa, similar to the one held in March 1991 in Rarotonga (Cook Islands) for the South Pacific States.

6. His delegation welcomed Economic and Social Council resolution 1991/25 and Commission on the Status of Women resolution 35/3, which recommended a close relationship between the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

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(Mr. Siddiq, Sudan)

7. The Sudanese Constitution provided for equality between men and women. Women constituted 57.5 per cent of the population and 71 per cent of them lived in rural areas and were engaged in subsistence economic activities. The illiteracy rate was extremely high, especially among women over 40. Urban women constituted 29 per cent of the female population and had a relatively low illiteracy rate (11 per cent). There were more girls in school than boys and, for the past 10 years, 60 per cent of university students had been female. In Government offices, 28 per cent of the staff were women. Nevertheless, the number of women at the highest policy-making and planning levels remained very low.

8. As part of its efforts to improve the status of women, the Sudan had convened a Conference on Sudanese women at Khartoum in March 1990. Despite those efforts, the needs and aspirations of Sudanese women remained to be met, owing to social and economic constraints. The Sudanese Government was particularly committed to eradicating the tradition of female genital mutilation which, although contrary to the teaching of Islam and a crime punishable under the Sudanese Penal Code, was still widely practised both in rural areas and in urban centres. To that end, the Government had launched an intensive campaign through its top officials, religious authorities, women's associations, social workers and the media.

9. The Sudanese Government, mindful of the importance of strengthening the national machinery for the effective implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies, had established a National Consultative Committee on the Status of Women under the Minister of Social Welfare and Development, the purpose of which was to defend the interests of women and to advise the Government on issues affecting women.

10. His delegation paid tribute to the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), which had been able to fulfil its mission despite its limited resources; Sudanese women had greatly benefited from INSTRAW.

11. His delegation welcomed the activities of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), particularly the technical and financial support which it provided at the grass-roots level in order to facilitate the economic and social integration of women.

12. The Sudan was one of the countries which received the largest number of refugees. It was currently hosting approximately 1 million refugees, in addition to some 3 million Sudanese who had been displaced by the war in the south and by unfavourable climatic conditions. The majority of the refugees and displaced persons were women, who faced the highest health risks, as shown by the mortality and morbidity statistics. In addition, women had suffered from the country's economic difficulties and from insufficient international assistance.

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(Mr. Siddig, Sudan)

13. His delegation welcomed the measures adopted by the Secretary-General, in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 45/125 and 45/239, to increase the number of women in the Secretariat. While hoping that such efforts would make it possible to achieve the objectives set for 1995, his delegation was convinced that even more strenuous efforts should be made to overcome fully the underrepresentation of women in various organizational units of the Secretariat.

14. Mr. FISENKO (Belarus) noted with satisfaction that, 10 years after the entry into force of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 109 States had become parties to it. Belarus supported the work of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, whose consideration of the periodic reports of States parties to the Convention was useful even though not always successful in promoting fruitful dialogue between experts and government representatives.

15. Belarus supported the Committee's recommendations (A/46/38) concerning unpaid women workers in family enterprises, the measurement and quantification of the unremunerated domestic activities of women and their recognition in the gross national product, and disabled women.

16. Moreover, the Committee had rightly decided to give careful consideration, at each of its sessions, to the implementation by States parties of a particular article of the Convention. The Committee should strengthen and expand its links with other bodies established under human rights instruments and with the Commission on the Status of Women. In that connection, Belarus had noted with interest paragraphs 25 and 30 of the Committee's report, as well as the information concerning the contribution of the Committee to the World Conference on Human Rights, the International Year of the Family and the World Conference on Women.

17. Belarus was currently preparing its third periodic report. It had already indicated in its two previous reports that the main principles of the Convention were embodied in its national legislation. In practice, however, analysis of the distribution of employment according to sex, for example, revealed imbalances. Moreover, while Belarusian women participated actively in the activities of the production sectors, the services set up to assist them were inadequate. Men and women therefore had unequal chances when it came to raising children, finding employment or succeeding in professional or family life. In addition, the transition of Belarus to a market economy would only worsen the employment problems of women, who would be the first to be affected when industrial workers were laid off since they comprised largely unskilled labour. Retraining, placement and subsidy programmes were planned for them, especially within the framework of the economic stabilization and social welfare plan adopted by the Belarusian Parliament in June 1991.

18. Those measures had been reinforced by several recently enacted laws, decrees and programmes concerning women, the family and children, the

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(Mr. Fisenko, Belarus)

significance of which had been increased even further by the devastation caused by the Chernobyl catastrophe. In the regions of Gomel and Mogilev, which were the most seriously affected, the incidence of anaemia, nose and throat diseases, and birth defects had increased sharply. The immune, endocrine, nervous and circulatory systems of the population of the affected zones had deteriorated. There was an increased incidence of cancer and leukaemia, which should reach its peak in 1994-1995. There had also been a decline in population growth.

19. His delegation was not the only one to attach great importance to the preparation for the fourth World Conference on Women, which would be a major international event in 1995. That was why Belarus had been particularly interested in the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2000 (A/46/439), which would be considered by the Commission on the Status of Women at its thirty-sixth session. Belarus also supported the inclusion in the provisional agenda of the thirty-sixth session of the Commission of the three priority themes contained in the report on its thirty-fifth session (E/1991/28). Those themes genuinely reflected the aspirations of millions of women from different regions of the world and it was in that spirit that the fourth World Conference should be prepared both in the Commission on the Status of Women and at the national level.

20. His delegation agreed with the Secretary-General (A/46/439) that, while considerable progress had been made in creating greater awareness and eliminating legal discrimination against women, discrimination continued to be practised in all countries, whatever their level of development, including Belarus.

21. Belarus had noted with interest the ideas contained in the report on the integration of women in the process of development and their role in the protection of the environment, and fully shared those ideas. With respect to the environment, technological catastrophes, such as that of Chernobyl demonstrated clearly how urgent the situation was; that factor deserved to be given priority, particularly in the above-mentioned report.

22. He also wished to draw attention to the participation of women in all efforts to promote international cooperation, peace and disarmament, a subject in which Belarus had always been very interested, as well as to paragraph 66 of the report, which dealt with the participation of women in public life.

23. Mrs. AGUILERA (Mexico), speaking on behalf of Colombia, Mexico and Venezuela, said that two of the issues most deserving of attention in the Committee's consideration of the subject of the advancement of women were the monitoring of the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women and the 1995 World Conference on Women. Those activities seemed to be suffering currently from the lack of resources mentioned by Mrs. Sellami-Meslem; it seemed also that action in favour of

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(Mrs. Aguilera, Mexico)

women had slowed and that there was less awareness of the many obstacles impeding the advancement of women. The various documents submitted under the agenda item presented a bleak picture of the progress made in improving the status of women, since the views and interests of women were still largely overlooked and the initiatives taken in that field were very bureaucratic.

24. The efforts of the various United Nations bodies and other national, international, governmental and independent agencies, though laudable, were inadequate. They nevertheless indicated the path to be taken in future, which was to focus initiatives on the society as a whole, to continue adapting the analysis and compilation of information to forms of participation that were appropriate for women, and to encourage and improve networks of cooperation between all interested bodies. It was also necessary to recognize the active role of women in the processes of production, reproduction and development of the society, without overlooking the fact that, together with children, women comprised the group that suffered most from the consequences of conflicts and other phenomena, such as the intifadah, apartheid, immigration and the refugee problem.

25. It was disturbing to note that in certain regions, only 12 per cent of the Governments had signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and that that figure dropped to 10 per cent world wide. Furthermore, many studies had shown that the discrimination and violence of which women were victims also affected those around them, including children, and had repercussions on development and on the interests of men themselves. It was heartening to note that women were continuing to struggle bravely to achieve de facto and de jure equality and to change the perception which men and women themselves had of their participation in the life of their country.

26. It was imperative for the international community to be made aware of the manifold obstacles that still stood in the way of women's advancement and to speed up implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies, taking advantage of the new era of international cooperation that appeared to be dawning in order to eliminate ancestral prejudices. She drew attention to three issues that should be explored in the coming years: the effect of structural adjustment measures on the status of women; the feminization of poverty; and women's health and nutrition. Regarding the first issue, the structural adjustment measures adopted by most developing countries to cope with the economic crisis of the 1980s had had adverse social and economic consequences for the status of women. It was essential, therefore, to promote recognition of the need for urgent measures to reverse that trend, and especially to facilitate women's access to credit, the means of production, markets, and the decision-making process. As for the feminization of poverty, the number of women living in destitution, far from diminishing, had greatly increased in recent years. Education and training were needed, and income-generating activities should be promoted to enable women to escape from the vicious circle of poverty. The deterioration in women's health and

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(Mrs. Aguilera, Mexico)

nutrition in many parts of the developing world was particularly alarming in view of its effects on the health of infants and children's chances of survival. The improvement of women's health, through adequate and accessible health-care services, should be given priority during the remainder of the century.

27. The 1995 World Conference on Women should give the international community an opportunity to reaffirm its determination to work for the improvement of women's status. Although independent bodies concerned with upholding women's rights and combating discrimination and violence against women were increasing locally, nationally and internationally and gaining growing support from Governments, it must not be forgotten that women's position was still inferior at every level of society, in all aspects of life and in every country in the world. It was thus extremely important that the World Conference should be properly prepared and provided with the support needed to give it the widest possible effect and the best chances of success, despite financial constraints and the requirements of rationalizing the work of the international organizations. In that connection, she hoped that the General Assembly would recommend that the Commission on the Status of Women should accept China's offer to host the Conference in 1995, bearing in mind the principle of equitable geographical distribution.

28. The situation of women in the Secretariat was still a matter of concern. According to the Secretary-General's report (A/46/377), women's participation did not seem to have changed much, particularly in the senior and middle levels. She noted in particular that the percentage of women recruited did not exceed the percentage of male candidates in any category. The target of 35 per cent of women in senior and director-level posts by 1995 was a long way from being achieved, seeing that only 8.6 per cent of women were at the D-1 level. A special effort must therefore be made to recruit more women and to continue nominating women candidates for vacancies.

29. Lastly, she stressed the importance of the role played by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the only United Nations body with the express task of providing financial and technical support for women's participation in all aspects of development. She commended UNIFEM for the direct support it had provided for various operational activities for development aimed at women, and welcomed in particular its role in encouraging the inclusion of women's interests in the programmes of development organizations, the institutionalization of women's issues and the allocation of resources for women. The Director of UNIFEM must continue her efforts to improve the Fund's effectiveness and profitability and tackle the world economic and social crises that had temporarily interrupted some of the Fund's programmes.

30. Ms. REHN (Finland), speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries, said that the principle of equality between men and women was fundamental in a just and democratic society. *De jure* discrimination might have been eliminated, but *de facto* inequality remained. The majority of women still lagged far behind

(Ms. Rehn, Finland)

in power and wealth. They were disadvantaged in many areas: education, productive assets, credit, income and services, decision-making, employment and remuneration.

31. To implement the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies and the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women for the period 1996-2001, every United Nations body must take the necessary steps to enhance the status of women. Within the United Nations system two bodies were responsible for promoting equality between men and women and safeguarding women's rights: the Commission on the Status of Women and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

32. The Commission had the task of monitoring the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies in Member States as well as within the United Nations system. In February 1991, the Commission had started preparing for the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace. It had to draw up a programme of action, including goals and concrete guidelines focusing on a limited number of issues identified as fundamental obstacles to the advancement of the majority of women. The Nordic countries appreciated the work done thus far by the Commission and intended to continue their cooperation. They hoped that, at its next session, the Commission would be able to decide by consensus on the venue of the World Conference. The Nordic countries wished to stress the importance of placing women in the mainstream of development in preparing for the Conference. Women should not be viewed only as recipients, but rather as contributors to the economic, political and social process.

33. However, adequate resources were needed for the demanding preparatory task. The Division for the Advancement of Women must be able to give the Commission the necessary support and the developing countries the assistance they needed to ensure that their national reports on the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies were included as part of the background documentation.

34. The Nordic countries wished to emphasize the importance of regional and national conferences in preparing for the global meeting. At the European level, preparatory meetings could contribute new ideas, especially in view of the dramatic changes which had taken place in Eastern and Central Europe. The Nordic Council of Ministers had decided to organize another Nordic Forum in 1994 in Finland, on women's life and work. Women's organizations and groups from the whole Baltic region would be invited to attend.

35. On the basis of the experience gained from the world conferences on women held at Mexico City, Copenhagen and Nairobi, the Nordic countries were convinced of the importance and value of the NGO forum to be held in parallel with the 1995 World Conference. The forum should be open to all women's organizations and groups, whose participation and cooperation were an example to all Governments everywhere.

(Ms. Rehn, Finland)

36. During its 10 years of existence, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women had acquired considerable experience and achieved positive results, especially in view of the limited resources at its disposal. The Secretary-General should accord higher priority to strengthening the Committee within the limits of existing resources.

37. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which was a powerful tool for the advancement of women, had so far been ratified by 109 States. The Nordic countries had on several occasions expressed their concern at the many reservations linked to the ratification of the Convention. That trend was unacceptable, and they urged the States concerned to amend their legislation and withdraw their reservations; those States which had not yet done so should ratify the Convention as quickly as possible without reservations.

38. The Nordic countries considered that the very important issue of the mechanisms for communications on the status of women, which was dealt with by the Commission on the Status of Women, had not received the attention it deserved, and they hoped that the Commission would consider the issue further at its next session.

39. If the United Nations was to live up to its role as an international promoter of the principle of equality, it was vital that it should begin by implementing that principle at all levels within its own system. Year after year, the General Assembly had reaffirmed its determination to see the number of women in the Secretariat increase. The Nordic countries hoped that the Secretary-General would do his utmost to achieve the new target of 35 per cent set for 1995. It was particularly important for more women to be employed in senior posts, bearing in mind the principle of equitable geographical distribution. To that end, Governments must also put forward more female candidates for such posts.

40. The Nordic countries wished to pay a tribute to Mrs. Aung San Suu Kyi of Myanmar, who had recently been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, for the exceptional personal courage she had displayed in her non-violent struggle for democracy and fundamental human rights in her country.

41. It was unfortunate that the consultation on women in public life scheduled for 1991, had been postponed; the Nordic countries hoped that it would be reinstated on the schedule of United Nations meetings.

42. The Nordic Council of Ministers had adopted a plan of action for Nordic equal status cooperation for the period 1989-1993. The plan concentrated on two themes, namely the role of women in economic development and the problems inherent in combining family and working life. In that context, consideration should be given to a number of factors: the role of men in the family; child-care facilities for working parents; parental leave; information on contraception and abortion; equal employment opportunities, pay and career

(Ms. Rehn, Finland)

prospects; measures to combat sexual harassment; and the suppression of all forms of trafficking in and prostitution of women.

43. While women were moving to the forefront of the global agenda for social, economic and political development and playing a greater economic role in all parts of the world, women's participation in actual economic and political decision-making at all levels had not increased. That situation was all the more tragic in that women not only played a central role in the development process, particularly in determining family size, but also acted as environmental managers. In the light of that dual role, women's activities were crucial to sustainable development.

44. The Nordic countries had taken a keen interest in the work of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women and hoped that it would be equipped with adequate resources to pursue its tasks. They looked forward with interest to the follow-up to the evaluation report on the Institute's activities.

45. UNIFEM was another important United Nations body seeking to involve women in mainstream development activities. The Nordic countries were convinced of the value of the national committees established in 12 countries, including the five Nordic countries themselves, in helping to increase awareness of the Fund's role and its efforts to improve the situation of women in the third world.

46. With reference to the ongoing process of reform within the Economic and Social Council, particularly the combining of two sessions into one, the Nordic countries felt that all questions relating to equality should be grouped in a cluster on the Council's agenda and considered simultaneously. In that way, the question of women in development would be firmly integrated into the overall discussion of equality issues.

47. In conclusion, she referred to the changes which had recently affected the world, stressing the importance of global problems and concerns common to all humankind, men and women alike, and the need to increase women's awareness of their rights and possibilities so that in the future problems could be resolved more equitably than they were at present.

48. Mr. SHOMAKHI (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that, although they made up half of the world's population, women were still underrepresented in the social, economic and political spheres. They should therefore be accorded equal rights with men and their participation in the decision-making process guaranteed at all levels of economic and social development. That being said, it was clear from the report on the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women (E/CN.6/1990/5) that discrimination still existed in all countries, whatever their level of development. His delegation therefore hoped that all States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, would meet their obligations in that regard.

(Mr. Shomakhi, Libyan Arab
Jamahiriya)

49. Having considered the report of the Commission on the Status of Women on the work of its thirty-fifth session (E/1991/28), his delegation particularly welcomed the draft resolutions on Palestinian women and women and children under apartheid.

50. His delegation also looked forward to the World Conference on Women to be held in 1995, which would offer an opportunity to assess the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies and to take fresh measures for the promotion of women. He hoped that the venue of the Conference would be decided by consensus.

51. After the glorious revolution of 1 September, Libyan women, who had hitherto been excluded from social and political life by colonialism and underdevelopment, had gained rights equal to those of men and full access to education and all the professions. They now participated fully in the country's political, trade-union and economic life; they took part in the conduct of affairs of State and represented the country on multilateral bodies or in its dealings with foreign Governments.

52. His delegation welcomed the activities of UNIFEM and INSTRAW, which were essential if women were to participate fully in economic life.

53. Mr. KASOULIDES (Cyprus) drew attention to the significance of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women on its tenth anniversary and urged all States to ratify or accede to it. He noted with satisfaction the efforts being made to coordinate the work of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women with that of other human rights treaty bodies so as to avoid duplication and overlapping. Small States found it increasingly difficult to abide by the multiple obligations arising under such instruments and would prefer a single reporting procedure, which would certainly facilitate both implementation and monitoring. Cyprus thanked the Division for the Advancement of Women for having helped it prepare its report, which would shortly be submitted to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, and believed that all States could, like it, benefit from the Division's excellent advice.

54. Since discrimination and injustice, from which the majority of the female population of the world continued to suffer, aroused considerable frustration, the United Nations had an obligation to create the conditions whereby equality for women could become a global priority. Moreover, the Organization should comply with the resolutions on the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat. The briefings with regional groups were useful in that they enhanced public awareness of shortcomings in that area and helped accelerate the pace of reaching the targets set. Furthermore, publications such as The World's Women, 1970-1990 provided useful guidance and information on the progress made and the obstacles remaining.

(Mr. Kasoulides, Cyprus)

55. It was obvious that, over the years, some progress had been made in the struggle for equal rights for women and for their full participation in all levels of decision-making. Attitudes had changed and aspects of discrimination against women were now debated in public and criticized, resulting in slow but steady progress. Accordingly, he welcomed the preparations for a world conference on women as one of the priorities of the United Nations. The success of the conference would depend on the active and substantive participation of women's non-governmental organizations at all stages of its preparation and running.

56. The new-found awareness of the close interrelationship between women and the environment should include recognition of the role of women in preserving and improving the environment. Women's participation in activities relating to water supply, sanitation and new and renewable sources of energy should be expanded and formalized since, in most societies, women were the custodians of environmental purity and, without their active and conscious participation, efforts to preserve the environment would not succeed. There should also be growing recognition of the role of women in development, given its vital importance for economic success and sustainable development.

57. Cyprus had always attached great importance to international efforts to achieve complete equality between men and women and to eliminate all remnants of discrimination against women. His Government recognized the important role which Cypriot women had played and continued to play in the search for a peaceful solution to the Cyprus problem, which lay in reconciliation and peaceful coexistence without external interference.

58. The Government of Cyprus was aware that legislative reforms should be followed by substantive changes in society. For that reason, its National Plan of Action on the Status of Women included long-term programmes aimed at promoting and securing the full participation of women in the country's political, economic, cultural and social life. That policy was coordinated by a national mechanism consisting of a Secretariat for Women's Rights and a committee of representatives of all ministries, under the Ministry of Justice. Believing that women's rights should not be separated from human rights in general, Cyprus had ratified not only the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, but also a number of international conventions which provided for equality between men and women, such as the European Social Charter, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Convention on the Political Rights of Women. Legislation on civil marriage, equal pay for both sexes and the protection of motherhood had recently been introduced and seminars and conferences on issues ranging from the role of the media in shaping social attitudes and the participation of women in public and political life had been held in an effort to enhance public awareness and promote the advancement of women in all areas of social and political life.

59. Ms. SZAFARZ (Poland) said that her Government had been aware for many years of the importance of equal participation by women and men in social and

(Ms. Szafarz, Poland)

economic development. In 1986, it had adopted a programme of activities for the advancement of women encompassing 22 areas of action, established national machinery pursuant to the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies and entrusted a plenipotentiary with coordinating the tasks to be undertaken.

60. Changes in Poland's political, economic and social system had affected women more adversely than men, especially with regard to unemployment and the overall decline in living standards. As a result of growing competition on the labour market, women might need retraining more often than men. Central and local administrative bodies and the national machinery for the advancement of women would have a role to play in that regard. One way of combating unemployment was to promote small business. Having no experience in that field, Poland wished to benefit from international cooperation. It noted, in that connection, that a conference organized jointly by the women's section of the trade union "Rural Solidarity" and the American Foundation for the Development of Polish Agriculture had been held in June 1991 to train women entrepreneurs in agriculture.

61. While Polish legislation guaranteed equal rights for women, and there was no discrimination against women within the meaning of article 1 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the situation often differed in practice. Because women were unaware of their rights, they were not always able to benefit from them. For instance, by law they could participate in the formulation and implementation of policy and could hold office at all levels of government, but in practice they were heavily underrepresented in decision-making. The report on the legal situation of women in Poland prepared by the national machinery for the advancement of women had served as a starting point for a comprehensive programme of action designed to improve knowledge of the legislation in force. However, in order to ensure women's political and economic participation, it was necessary for all concerned, especially women's organizations and the media, to make a real commitment to action.

62. Poland supported the convening in 1995 of a further world conference on women and was prepared to participate actively in the preparatory process. The discussions should not be limited to a mere exchange of views, however, but should lead to conclusions and recommendations. In her delegation's view, the implementation of conclusions and recommendations and the flow of information between United Nations organs and Member States should be improved. In view of the constructive role which non-governmental women's organizations had played in the success of the Nairobi Conference, Poland supported the full involvement of non-governmental organizations in a new world conference. Preparations for the conference should be the responsibility of all relevant units of the United Nations system, and her delegation expected that both the Economic and Social Council and the Committee for Programme and Coordination and the Administrative Committee on Coordination would coordinate United Nations efforts and Member States' contributions to ensure the full success of the endeavour.

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(Ms. Szafarz, Poland)

63. Her Government was particularly interested in developing regional and interregional cooperation on the advancement of women. The regional seminar on the impact of economic and political reforms on the status of women in Eastern Europe and the USSR, held at Vienna in April 1991, had provided an opportunity to formulate recommendations which were important to all States that were transforming their economies and political systems. Poland was looking forward to the interregional consultations on the role of women in public life. It regretted the postponement of those consultations, but hoped that the additional time would allow Member States and the Division for the Advancement of Women to prepare for them more thoroughly.

64. Poland attached great importance to the East-West conference on women's issues organized by the Council of Europe, which was to be held in Poland in December 1991.

65. Her Government believed that the United Nations should place particular emphasis on the following subjects: the impact of recent changes in Central and Eastern Europe on the status of women and their place in society; the position of women in public life, as a reflection of de jure and/or de facto discrimination; and women and AIDS.

66. Mrs. SKOWRON-OLSZOWSKA (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) said that the advancement of women was one of the top priorities of UNESCO, as its Director-General had reaffirmed at the twenty-sixth session of the General Conference held in Paris. Two thirds of the world's illiterate people were women and there was a renewed conviction within the international community that in order to resolve the enormous problems that existed, efforts must be made to involve vulnerable populations, including women, in the development process. UNESCO had accordingly given priority to literacy training and education at all levels for girls and women and their access to scientific and technical education. It had also promoted women's participation in cultural development and their access to the communications professions. UNESCO would henceforth devote half of the budget allocated to the advancement of women to literacy and primary education programmes, particularly in rural areas.

67. Even though considerable progress had been made, notably through normative action, inequality between the sexes was still prevalent in education and vocational training, particularly in developing countries, and was often exacerbated by the economic crisis.

68. The World Conference on Education For All, held in 1990 in Thailand, had blamed that situation on the fact that insufficient attention was paid to the division of roles according to sex and to the part played by women in development. As a follow-up to the Conference, an inter-agency project on basic education for girls had been proposed and would focus on the different aspects of the problem. UNESCO would ensure that the interdisciplinary approach was maintained and would improve cooperation among the specialized agencies of the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations.

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(Mrs. Skowron-Olszowska, UNESCO)

69. The total number of member States who were parties to the Convention against Discrimination in Education was still 77, the same as in 1989. At the fifth consultation of States parties (1990-1991), in which 71 States had taken part, it had been stressed that serious obstacles would have to be overcome in order for women to be treated in the same way as men, but that considerable progress had nevertheless been achieved, particularly in the field of education. In countries where education was for the most part reserved for boys, youth and women's organizations and other non-governmental organizations were endeavouring to remedy the situation. Most countries had opted for a coeducational system. Thirty-three countries had a fully coeducational system (from nursery school to university) and none of them wished to reconsider their decision. In 32 other countries, schools reserved for one or the other sex, particularly at secondary level, still existed. Only eight countries, all of them Islamic, had set up wholly segregated systems for boys and girls above the age of 10, although the entrance requirements were identical for both sexes.

70. With regard to studies and research and exchange of information and experience, many studies on the connection between education, vocational training and fertility had been carried out, particularly in the context of literacy or post-literacy activities, in a number of Islamic countries. That had prompted more detailed studies on the family, marriage, family planning and the social and cultural development of the community.

71. Studies on the technical and vocational training given to girls and women with a view to finding well-paid employment indicated that emphasis should be placed not only on teacher training and curriculum reform but also on the upbringing given to girls in their families.

72. With regard to vocational training, the International Literacy Year (1990) had given rise to many initiatives and publications.

73. Programmes in the field of literacy and adult education, implemented by UNESCO and financed for the most part from extrabudgetary funds, were under way in a number of African countries, and a literacy project was being proposed for nomadic women in the Gobi desert, in Mongolia. In 1990, a pilot project for post-literacy and vocational training had been implemented in Laos for girls belonging to ethnic minorities, and in Senegal, a functional literacy project for adults was adopting a special strategy to enlist fuller participation by women in the programme. Within the framework of the follow-up to the World Conference on Education for All, the implementation of the Pan-African programme on the schooling of girls at primary level was continuing in 15 countries. A meeting would be held to analyse the findings and prepare new operational projects.

74. Lastly, on the question of the status of women in organizations in the United Nations system, detailed statistics comparing the situation of men and women in the UNESCO secretariat had been made available to delegations.

75. The CHAIRMAN reminded delegations that, in preparing draft resolutions, they should conform to the provisions of General Assembly resolution 45/175 on the rationalization of the work of the Third Committee and to the Committee's biennial programme of work.

The meeting rose at noon.

UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly
FORTY-SIXTH SESSION
Official Records

THIRD COMMITTEE
19th meeting
held on
Tuesday, 22 October 1991
at 3 p.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 19th MEETING

<u>Chairman:</u>	Mr. AL-SHAALI	(United Arab Emirates)
later:	Mr. ALFARO-PINEDA (Vice-Chairman)	(El Salvador)
later:	Mr. AL-SHAALI (Chairman)	(United Arab Emirates)

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AGENDA ITEM 95: ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN (continued)

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Distr. GENERAL
A/C.3/46/SR.19
28 October 1991

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

91-56708 5000S (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 95: ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN (continued) (A/46/3 (chap. VI, sect. D), 38, 77, 325, 344, 377, 439, 462, 491, 501/Rev.1)

1. Mr. THOMPSON (Jamaica) said that endorsement of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2000 by the General Assembly in 1985 had shown the willingness to change many inequalities existing between men and women. By adopting resolution 45/129, the General Assembly had again reaffirmed its determination to encourage the full participation of women in society. The report of the Secretary-General (A/46/439) on the first review and appraisal of implementation of the Strategies had concluded that considerable progress had been made in eradicating legal discrimination against women; however, discrimination still existed in practice in all countries regardless of their level of development. Therefore, Governments must enforce and monitor women's legislation in order to redress de facto discrimination. Public declaration of commitment to an equal opportunity policy and its consistent execution would also have an impact on governmental programmes to promote equality.
2. Jamaica was a party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and its Constitution guaranteed fundamental rights and freedoms for all citizens. It had also adopted a national policy statement reaffirming its commitment to women's development and directing all government departments to implement that policy. Its goals included ensuring that economic, trade and employment policies protected and increased women's access to employment and income; identification and upgrading of women's skills, improved access to credit, markets and support services, improvement in women's pay and conditions of work, diversification of women's employment, and appropriate child-care measures. The Bureau of Women's Affairs also helped women to realize their potential while creating avenues for their full integration into national development.
3. Jamaica was pleased that a special analysis would be made of the contribution of ageing women to development, and that the Commission on the Status of Women would be provided with a comprehensive picture of the issue of ageing women as a potentially vulnerable group.
4. In order to be active participants in development, women must be active in politics and decision-making. In Jamaica, women held high positions in the political arena and the public sector. Furthermore, a non-governmental organization offered a training programme geared towards preparing women for political life. His delegation appreciated the Secretary-General's efforts to increase the recruitment of women in the United Nations Secretariat, though continuing and forceful efforts would be necessary in order to reach and possibly surpass the set goals. The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) should be congratulated on its programmes, which had enabled many women in developing countries to seize control of their own lives and well-being.

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5. Mrs. BARGHOUTI (Observer for Palestine) said that, while her delegation appreciated the Secretary-General's report on the situation of Palestinian women (E/CN.6/1991/9), that report did not reflect the harsh reality of their conditions. Moreover, although her delegation highly appreciated the work of UNRWA, its report was not related to Economic and Social Council resolution 1990/11, which requested a report on the situation of Palestinian women. Her delegation had hoped that the report would have responded to that resolution and to the recommendation of the report of the mission of experts (E/CN.6/1990/10).

6. The condition of Palestinian women and children in the occupied Palestinian territory continued to deteriorate at an alarming rate, as a result of Israeli occupation and oppression. Those women were suffering physically, socially, economically and emotionally. Curfews, confiscation of land, military terrorism, destruction of the educational and cultural structure of Palestinian society, and separation of families through deportation of husbands, brothers and fathers were inflicting great harm on Palestinian women and their families. Meanwhile, medical services had deteriorated drastically.

7. In response to the worsening conditions for Palestinian women prisoners held in Israeli jails, the United Council of Palestinian Women had appealed to the international community to intervene on their behalf. The Council had demanded improvement in medical treatment, nutrition and sanitation, educational materials, family visitation rights, and an end to collective punishment.

8. Living under occupation, the Palestinian woman faced the danger of losing her identity and being deprived of her basic human rights. She also faced discrimination, unemployment, violence and persecution. She and her family suffered from poverty, hunger and thirst, along with deteriorating health facilities and interrupted education. But those experiences had failed to crush the determination of Palestinian women. They would continue to fight against Israeli oppression until the international community took the necessary action to protect them. The advancement of Palestinian women and their full equality and self-reliance could only be achieved by an end to the Israeli occupation and the attainment of their right to self-determination and establishment of an independent state in accordance with United Nations resolutions and the Charter.

9. Mr. PARSHIKOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that his delegation welcomed the increased number of States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and at the same time shared the concern that most States which had not acceded to the Convention were situated in regions where the status of women left much to be desired. The States participating in the recent Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe held in Moscow had agreed to urge the States which had not yet done so to ratify or accede to the Convention and the States parties which had expressed reservations to consider withdrawing them.

(Mr. Parshikov, USSR)

10. The States participating in the Conference had reaffirmed that their objective was to achieve both de jure and de facto equality of opportunity for men and women and had undertaken to carry out the necessary measures to implement the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies, strengthen existing national machinery for the advancement of women and take steps to halt all forms of violence against and exploitation of women.

11. In accordance with the final document of the Moscow Conference, the participants would encourage efforts to provide all possible economic opportunities for women. Particular importance had been attached to the need to ensure that no structural reform policies or programmes discriminated against women.

12. The participants had also undertaken to encourage the broadest participation by women in all aspects of political and social life, decision-making, training and employment and to collect information in order to evaluate the status of women in society and improve it.

13. Ensuring the rights of women was a major aspect of the overall question of human rights. That view should be taken into account in the preparations for the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights because it would be impossible to build a civilized and democratic world community without eliminating discrimination against women. But such discrimination still existed, and women were very rarely in a position to participate in national and international policy-making.

14. Nevertheless, there were grounds for optimism. Since its inception, the Organization had made significant efforts to achieve equality of men and women. The relevant United Nations bodies were making an important contribution in that regard. Positive results were also being achieved at the regional level. Non-governmental organizations were playing a more active role in protecting the interests of women and many countries were carrying out as a matter of priority national programmes for the advancement of women. Although his country had proclaimed equality of men and women and ensured equal rights for women under the law, millions of Soviet women lacked medical care, services and household appliances, and were employed in arduous and low-paying jobs. His Government considered the advancement of Soviet women a top priority and he hoped to be able to report on progress at the next session of the General Assembly.

15. Mrs. GOLAN (Israel) said that she was pleased to report that Israel had recently ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, together with the two Human Rights Covenants. After thorough examination, her Government had been able to ratify those instruments without the need to adopt or amend any legislation.

16. In surveying the status of women in Israel and the problems still to be faced, she said that Israel was a heterogeneous, pluralist society in which people of different religions, cultures and social traditions lived side by

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(Mrs. Golan, Israel)

side. Women's legal and social status reflected the interaction of traditional life patterns with a modern western lifestyle. Full and equal rights for men and women were embodied in Israel's Declaration of Independence, and those principles had been strengthened subsequently by laws defining the rights of women. The right of different religious communities to jurisdiction over matters of personal status, such as marriage, divorce, maintenance and guardianship, had been inherited from the Ottoman and British legal systems in force before independence. Since the establishment of the State of Israel, additional laws more in conformity with modern concepts had been enacted. She provided an overview of the wide range of legislation enacted to ensure women's equality in the workplace.

17. Although Israel's democratic system allowed for equal participation of all citizens in its multi-party political arena, women were still underrepresented on both national and local levels. Many were reluctant to enter public life because its demands might curtail the time they could devote to their family. At the same time, many women active in public life found themselves at a disadvantage due to the existing nomination process for candidates. Women were becoming increasingly conscious of the need to be more politically assertive and in recent years, women's organizations had been encouraging women to meet the challenges of political life more effectively.

18. Arab and Druze women had exercised their right to vote since the earliest elections but had not yet fully participated in political life. They had attained independent legal status and equality of educational opportunity, which had brought about far-reaching changes in their perception of their role within the family and the community. Many worked outside the home and contributed to the family income, thereby strengthening their position within the family. Increasing numbers had acquired post-secondary and university education, opening more opportunities for professional employment. Some resulting shifts in attitudes towards women had begun to occur, but deeply-rooted traditions still hampered Arab and Druze women in fully benefiting from their rights and privileges under law.

19. About 7 per cent of Israeli women lived in cooperative rural communities, such as the kibbutz and the moshav. Women were equal members of the kibbutz in all respects and were socially and economically independent. Released from domestic duties, they were equal participants in the kibbutz labour force. Jobs in all branches of the kibbutz economy were open to them. Membership in the moshav was by family, although both husband and wife were considered members in their own right. Agriculture was the main source of employment in the moshav. With the introduction of agricultural mechanization and labour-saving devices in the home, moshav women were increasingly able to seek employment outside the home and farm.

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(Mrs. Golan, Israel)

20. Government bodies and voluntary organizations shared in the commitment to advance the status of women by including components specifically intended to promote women's interests. She listed the government and public bodies specifically concerned with the status of women which had been established following the 1975 International Year for Women.

21. Women in Israel had greatly narrowed the gap between their equality by law and societal constraints on its full expression. The growing awareness among women of their potential as equal partners had generated pressure for more representation on national and local levels and more influence in decision-making in all spheres of life.

22. Mr. HUSSAIN (Pakistan) said that the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies had created an awareness that women could no longer be marginalized in the national development and political process. Women dominated a large segment of the non-cash economy, especially subsistence agriculture and domestic labour, and must be viewed as vital participants in development.

23. Progress in the implementation of the Nairobi Strategies could be achieved only under favourable socio-economic conditions. Underdevelopment, hunger, disease and population growth adversely affected the advancement of women in developing countries. A major change in attitudes about development was required on the part of not only developing countries but also financial institutions and donor countries. The negative impact of structural-adjustment measures was greatest on vulnerable groups, particularly poor women. The advancement of women must be part of an overall development strategy based on a concerted international effort.

24. Although investing in the advancement of women would not solve all development problems, it would contribute to efforts to deal with those problems and promote better use of resources and opportunities in the future.

25. The World Conference on Women to be held in 1995 would enable States to renew their political commitment to the full implementation of the Strategies by the end of the century. A limited number of goals should be identified for a programme of action to be adopted at the Conference and realistic targets should be set with concrete guidelines for achieving them.

26. The Constitution of Pakistan guaranteed equality of opportunity for all citizens, irrespective of sex. His Government was fully committed to integrating women into the mainstream of national development. A Ministry of Women's Development had been established to promote the advancement of women through development programmes targeting such areas as education, health, vocational training and social welfare. The Pakistan Commission on the Status of Women, established in 1984, had the task of making recommendations to the Government to safeguard women's rights.

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(Mr. Hussain, Pakistan)

27. The Government had set up a bank staffed and run exclusively by women in order to integrate women into the national business community. His country had set a 5-per-cent quota for women's employment in the public-service sector and equal employment opportunities were available through open competition. Non-governmental organizations involved in the social and economic advancement of women received considerable financial support from the Government. Women could participate in decision-making at the highest level by standing as candidates in open elections for national and provincial assemblies.

28. Pakistan continued to provide shelter to the largest single concentration of refugees in the world. Despite limited resources, it was doing its best to assist the over 3 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan, three quarters of them women and children. The international community must take steps without delay to facilitate their voluntary return to their country of origin in safety and honour.

29. The International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) had made a valuable contribution to the implementation of the Nairobi Strategies. His country continued to support the efforts to increase the percentage of women in the Secretariat, particularly at senior policy-level and decision-making posts. Emphasis should be placed on increasing the representation of women from developing countries to rectify the existing imbalance.

30. Ms. SURAPOLBHICHET (Thailand) said that the Nairobi Strategies were a milestone in United Nations efforts to promote the advancement of women. The constructive recommendations adopted in 1990 at the first review and appraisal meeting should be fully implemented. The success of the Strategies required concerted efforts at every level by all parties concerned. Thailand supported the United Nations system-wide medium-term plan for women and development. The 1995 World Conference on Women would give new impetus to the implementation of the Strategies. She hoped that the preparatory activities would produce additional recommendations.

31. At the national level, Governments must establish their focal points without delay. National machinery was essential to ensure that the women's agenda became an integral part of national development plans. The Organization should therefore use all possible means to support the work of the national machinery.

32. In Thailand, the National Commission on Women's Affairs spearheaded efforts to improve the status of Thai women and had played a crucial role in revising the country's long-term women's development plan and formulating policy on women's development in the current five-year national development plan. The Commission planned to convene a national assembly on women's development in the near future to ensure that the agencies concerned understood the objectives set and how to achieve them. The plans emphasized

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(Ms. Surapolbhichet, Thailand)

education, the participation of women in decision-making, legal measures to improve the promotion of women's rights and law enforcement to deal with crimes committed against women.

33. Thailand was determined to improve its educational and training systems on the basis of the principle of non-discrimination so that women would have greater opportunities and access to more services. Some of Thailand's reservations to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination against Women had been withdrawn in 1990 and the few remaining reservations were currently under review. Her delegation supported the call for broader accession to and ratification of the Convention. Lastly, she commended the work of the United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM) for its remarkable world-wide programmes.

34. Mrs. MOLOJWANE (Botswana) said that the 1995 World Conference on Women would provide a good opportunity to review and appraise the progress made in implementing the Nairobi Strategies. States should demonstrate the political will to bring about social and economic changes in order to eliminate the structural imbalances that perpetuated the disadvantaged position of women in society. It was disturbing to note that women still played a disproportionately small part in political life and decision-making in most countries. States should eradicate legal discrimination against women and eliminate cultural and tradition-related factors which were discriminatory against women.

35. In developing countries, particularly in Africa, attention should focus on both the needs of families headed by single females and the plight of married women. In some cultures in Africa, married women were viewed as minors and, for example, were unable to obtain a loan without the consent of their husbands. States should take into account all categories of women, including the disabled, refugees, the elderly and the illiterate.

36. The Botswana Women's Development Planning and Advisory Committee, made up of representatives from various ministries, consulted with and advised various government departments and non-governmental organizations on women's issues. Under the Government's decentralization policies, local authorities managed health and primary-education services, permitting greater participation by women in development planning and implementation. The contribution of Botswana women in the non-formal sector could not be overestimated. Over 90 per cent of day-care centres in the country were run by women's organizations.

37. The Botswana Women's Affairs Unit conducted workshops and seminars for women from all walks of life in order to identify their needs and problems and formulate strategies to address them. On the basis of the Unit's recommendations, the Government had granted women full pay for maternity leave. With regard to employment, the highest proportion of working women was in the Government and, on the whole, the proportion of women employed in the

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(Mrs. Molojwane, Botswana)

formal sector had increased to nearly one third. Men and women received equal pay for equal work. However, much still remained to be done. In conclusion, she commended United Nations bodies such as UNIFEM for their wonderful work in promoting the advancement of women throughout the world.

38. Ms. MANSARAY (Sierra Leone) said that her Government attached great importance to United Nations activities aimed at improving the status of women, and that it was essential for the machinery designed for that purpose to function efficiently.

39. In Sierra Leone, many women suffered under the triple burden of domestic responsibilities, agricultural production and, most importantly, the increasing need to ensure the family's survival by participating in the formal or informal economic sector. After endless hours spent in agricultural labour and household chores, women had little time and energy for taking part in public life, and that, in turn, limited their access to positions of power. Moreover, it was not easy for them to avail themselves of education and training opportunities in order to obtain better employment.

40. Sierra Leone's policy for the advancement of women focused on income generation and employment, legal protection, education, training and health care, with special emphasis on women heads of households and on adolescent and pregnant women.

41. Sierra Leone had participated in various international meetings on women's issues and had acceded to the Convention in 1989. Her Government called for a comprehensive approach towards eradicating discrimination against women.

42. Mrs. KOGNAN (Togo) said that her country had become a party to the Convention in 1983 as a means of joining in international action for the implementation of all its provisions, taking account of the characteristics of each society. She therefore welcomed the general recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in document A/46/38 on unpaid women workers in family enterprises, measurement and quantification of unremunerated domestic activities and disabled women. Her delegation welcomed the latest report of the Commission on the Status of Women, particularly its concentration on vulnerable groups of women. Togo believed that national action on the advancement of women needed strengthening; it shared the view that development required the full participation of women and that without institutions to deal with women's issues, their contribution would continue to be ignored.

43. She noted from the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the Forward-looking Strategies (A/46/439) that the targets had still not been achieved. The lack of integration of women in political and administrative decision-making only strengthened her delegation's conviction that political stability, social harmony and the cessation of armed conflicts could never be

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(Mrs. Kognaw, Togo)

achieved until the objectives of the Strategies had been realized. In that respect, she supported the preparatory work for the 1995 World Conference on Women if carried out in implementation of the Nairobi Strategies. The Conference offered an opportunity to demonstrate political will to make the social and economic changes needed to eliminate the cultural imbalance suffered by women, particularly in the developing countries.

44. She commended UNIFEM on its activities in highlighting the role of women and promoting action at all levels. She also commended INSTRAW on its activities and supported its new programmes concerning the environment, communications, work in the informal sector, and AIDS, particularly in the developing countries.

45. Togo recognized the importance of women's role and women were already being appointed to top political and administrative posts. Women were also active in the private sector. In general, action for the advancement of women was still focused on the rural sector.

46. Ms. AL-KHALID (Kuwait) said that Kuwaiti women had proved their courage during Iraq's occupation of Kuwait; those in Kuwait at the time had played their part alongside the men and suffered the same ordeals, including martyrdom, whilst those abroad had represented their country, organizing demonstrations and support systems. Today, they were effectively channelling their skills into the reconstruction of Kuwait on an equal basis with their male compatriots. Her delegation attached great importance to the advancement of women, given their role in all walks of life and their effective contribution to development.

47. Men and women had equal rights and duties under the Constitution, which also protected family welfare. Moreover, legislation had been enacted to protect women at work and provide for equal pay, equal promotion, equal holidays and maternity leave. Women in Kuwait now held senior positions in both public and private sectors as a result of the attention given to raising their educational level. Having ratified the conventions of the United Nations intended to eliminate discrimination against women and improve their status both socially and in the workplace, Kuwait was attempting to achieve the aims of the United Nations Decade for Women. She urged the Committee to step up its efforts concerning the advancement of women, adding that moves to assist women in exercising their rights and freedoms should no less be forgotten.

48. Ms. ASHIPALA (Namibia) said that the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which her country was in the process of ratifying, had been adopted at a time when Namibian women had no voice in their own country. With independence, however, women were encouraged and enabled to play a full, equal and effective role in the reconstruction of their nation. The Constitution outlawed sex discrimination and protected women's rights as individuals and within the family, thus opening doors to women which had been barred. The Department of Women's Affairs, established

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(Ms. Ashipala, Namibia)

in 1990, had been examining how it could relate to other government institutions in order to further the constitutional provisions on the advancement of women. It was also organizing workshops, in cooperation with non-governmental organizations, to ensure that women at all levels understood those provisions.

49. The long existence of traditional and discriminatory apartheid laws had disadvantaged women in many ways, particularly in respect of property rights. Following repeal of those laws, the Cabinet in September 1990 had instructed the Department to identify discriminatory legislation and the Ministry of Justice had invited other ministries and government offices to assist in setting up a Law Reform Commission to review discriminatory laws and recommend amendments. The Department was now lobbying for the appointment of a woman in the Office of the Ombudsman and for a Cabinet decision that all draft legislation should be submitted to the Department for comment. She expressed her delegation's appreciation to UNIFEM for its assistance to the Department. Her delegation welcomed the ILO decision to assist in a symposium on development of strategies and policies for the promotion of equal opportunity and treatment for men and women.

50. The migrant-labour system had left women on their own to contribute to agriculture and livestock production, which were strenuous and labour-intensive. The environmental degradation caused by the destruction of forests was increasing rapidly, but women were dependent on natural resources for domestic and production purposes, and found it difficult to balance the requirements of conservation with the need to feed and provide for their families. Namibia therefore attached great importance to the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. It was essential for women all over the world to participate in the Conference since they bore the brunt of environmental degradation, which was linked to rural poverty.

51. Since access to arable and grazing land for rural dwellers was not based on ownership rights, women's access to land was channelled through their relationship with men and was therefore insecure. That practice must end. In the southern region, for example, poverty was compounded by isolation from the major centres of production; women were employed as seasonal or temporary workers and thus locked in a vicious cycle of insecurity and family retrogression. In the northern region the after-effects of the war continued even today. Young women accounted for an increasing proportion of landless and marginalized squatters seeking to earn income from informal-sector activities such as the sale of alcohol. In that connection she referred to the Land Conference held in Windhoek earlier in the year. Its recommendations, in which women had been consulted on the land issue for the first time, irrespective of marital status and in their own right, were to be presented to the Government for the formulation of its land-redistribution policy.

52. Following the adoption of the World Declaration on the Survival,

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(Ms. Ashipala, Namibia)

Protection and Development of Children, Namibia had committed itself to a national plan of action, whose goals for the period up to the year 2000 concerned women's fundamental needs, particularly in relation to health and education. Namibia appreciated the support it was receiving from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

53. Her delegation welcomed the 1995 World Conference on Women, which would provide a further opportunity to review the Nairobi Strategies, and urged that any new strategies should take account of the differing situation of women from region to region. Her delegation also welcomed the forthcoming First Ladies' Summit on Rural Women to be held in Brussels.

54. Ms. RAOELINA (Madagascar) said that Madagascar had a young population with a high fertility rate. Some 80 per cent of the women lived in the rural areas. Women represented a valuable and growing human potential, since over half of them were of working age.

55. Although Malagasy society today was patriarchal, there were traces of the former matriarchal civilization in that women were regarded as the link between the past and the future because of their procreative faculty. That would largely explain their privileged status as the source of life. Malagasy women had always played an active role in promoting the family and the community.

56. In Madagascar, private law on women, which was partly customary, under the influence of French private law, reflected the efforts of the legislature to promote the status of women. Madagascar had ratified or acceded to a number of international conventions concerning women, and the Administrative Chamber and the Constitutional High Court were responsible for monitoring equality between men and women. In 1976 a Ministry for Population and Social Advancement had been established, with a department on the status of women and children to monitor the status of women, implement government policy on women and coordinate the activities of women's organizations.

57. Women's emancipation depended on economic and social conditions. Governments must define the role of women in national development, but the international community must ensure favourable conditions for the realization of the objectives of development. Her delegation regretted the slow progress in implementing the Nairobi Strategies. The obstacles in the developing countries, particularly in Africa, included extreme poverty, disease, hunger, and the chronic external debt.

58. Her delegation supported the proposal of the Group of 77 calling upon the Commission on the Status of Women to pay special attention to women in the developing countries, particularly in Africa and in the least developed countries, who suffered disproportionately from the world economic crisis, the burden of debt and structural adjustment. The 1995 World Conference on Women must define measures to eliminate those obstacles.

59. Mr. Al-Shaali (United Arab Emirates) resumed the Chair.

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60. Mr. AL-HABASHI (Oman) said that women were entirely capable of sharing the responsibility for social and economic development with men. In Oman, women were rightly deemed to be a major factor in the success of any social institution, whether within the family or in society at large, and improving their educational, health, social and economic levels would benefit social progress. Omani women had made an effective contribution to development, having been well-prepared to assume their responsibilities in that respect. In recognition of their role, a comprehensive system of support services for women was in place, with positive results. A women's association was active throughout the country, and a national development plan encompassed programmes to raise the overall educational level of women in the rural areas. Oman had always endeavoured to make an effective contribution to enterprises concerning the advancement of women, whether regionally or internationally.

61. In Oman, unlike some countries, there was no discrimination against women in terms of work or pay. They enjoyed rights of ownership under Islamic law, had the same educational and employment opportunities as men, and were entitled to paid maternity leave. Women in Oman were now employed in all vocational and professional fields at all levels, meaning that their status as an influential element in society had been fully acknowledged.

62. Mr. ROKOTUIVUNA (Fiji) said that his delegation was grateful to the Division for the Advancement of Women for conducting in Rarotonga a regional seminar on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The technical nature of the seminar and advisory services would assist Fiji in enhancing the role of women in development.

63. In Fiji, equal opportunity for women in the upper echelons of government had gained greater impetus with the establishment of the Ministry for Women. There were currently two women ministers with cabinet rank and two women heads of government departments; for the first time, a woman had been appointed a magistrate. Many others occupied senior positions in public service or private enterprise, and were influential in all spheres of development, including policy formulation, programme implementation and decision-making.

64. His Government placed great importance on enhancing the quality of life of women in rural areas, and several projects were under way to improve housing and the water supply and to provide access to education and health services. Workshops had also been organized to promote women's skills and family planning and to ameliorate nutrition and hygiene. In all those activities, Fiji was grateful to UNIFEM, UNDP and WHO, as well as to all the donor States, for their assistance.

65. Women in Fiji were relatively well-educated, had equal voting rights and accounted for a significant proportion of the workforce. They were an integral part of Fiji's development process.

66. Ms. ARUNGU-OLENDE (Kenya) said that one of the most intractable obstacles to the advancement of women was the persistence of social and cultural practices and attitudes even when equality existed by law. Although campaigns had been conducted to influence traditional sex bias, those efforts were far from achieving the desired goal. Assistance to those involved in implementing programmes to bring about change was therefore crucial if improvement was to be made in the long term.

67. The debt burden and structural-adjustment programmes of the 1980s had impeded the advancement of women in Kenya. Success in implementing the Forward-looking Strategies had been adversely affected by the existing international economic order and by increasing urban poverty among women and children. There was an urgent need for programmes tailored to young women that focused on adolescent fertility and single mothers.

68. Following the 1985 World Conference on Women held in Nairobi, a two-year operational-research project had been launched by the Kenyan Women's Bureau and Public Law Institute on abuse and violence against women, with a view to creating multidisciplinary services for the victims and mapping out a long-term strategy. Owing in part to the victims' reluctance to come forward, the project had met with considerable difficulties. Women must be encouraged to speak out on the issue, which was not confined to one country or cultural system. Action by Member States at the national level must be encouraged. Education to promote respect for every individual, starting from childhood, must be furthered. Her delegation was pleased to note that the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) would be discussing the issue under article 6 of the Convention.

69. The growing impoverishment of women must not be allowed to continue. Young women must be vigorously encouraged to pursue educational opportunities. Women needed skills for participating in the informal sector on an equal footing with men, and must not be prevented from working in male-dominated occupations for lack of financial assistance or credit.

70. Her delegation supported the work of UNIFEM, which must show greater flexibility in meeting the demands of poor urban and rural women. The roles and needs of women changed with the times, and UNIFEM's mandate must be amended accordingly.

71. The Secretary-General's report on the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat (A/46/377) showed that unless Governments stepped up their efforts at the national level, it would be difficult to meet the 35-per-cent target set for 1995. Governments, especially African Governments, must be asked to do more in that respect.

72. With regard to the venue of the 1995 World Conference on Women, her delegation supported the position of the Group of 77.

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73. Ms. SELLAMI-MESLEM (Director, Division for the Advancement of Women) said that the debate had been stimulating and had shown her that the Division was on the right track and was responding to the programmes of both developing and developed countries in achieving the advancement envisaged by the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies. The priority themes - such as poverty; women as heads of households; the impact of the economic crisis, debt and structural readjustment on women in the third world; violence; participation in decision-making; women as refugees and displaced persons and women living in centres of conflict; and elderly women - were now being dealt with in projects undertaken by United Nations agencies, largely on the basis of recommendations from expert groups, seminars and the Commission on the Status of Women.

74. Those projects were the result of prospects opened during debates in the Third Committee, for which she was extremely grateful. The continuing dialogue between Member States and the Division guaranteed success - the realization of equality between men and women - perhaps by the year 2000. There had, of course, been frustration over lack of resources, but she was confident that, through the determination of the members of the Committee, the competent organs of the General Assembly would respond to appeals.

75. Many representatives had expressed the hope that the high-level interregional consultation on women in public life could be reinstated. She assured them that as soon as the necessary voluntary contributions had been received, including contributions to finance the participation of the least developed countries, a date would be fixed in consultation with the Commission on the Status of Women, which would welcome suggestions.

76. In response to questions, she said that the Division hoped to take part in the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development and the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights. It would certainly take part in the Global Assembly of Women and the Environment to take place at Miami in November 1991 and had already prepared two papers. As to the next session of CEDAW, she looked forward to hearing as soon as possible from the countries that would be submitting reports, namely, Barbados, China, Czechoslovakia, El Salvador, Ghana, Honduras, Spain, Sri Lanka and Venezuela. That session would be followed by a meeting of States parties, at which those parties whose membership in the Committee ended in 1992 would be invited to submit new nominations.

77. Miss SHIELDS (Director, International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW)) thanked the members of the Committee for their thoughtful and constructive approach to the reports before them. Despite impatience at the slow pace in the advancement of women, and despite the fact that it was more than 16 years since the first United Nations Conference on Women and 10 years since the coming into force of the Convention, the Institute's efforts were still very necessary. No one was more conscious of the need for action in the area of development for women - and by women - than the people working on their behalf in the United Nations. The problems were not easy to solve, but with real commitment, adequate

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(Miss Shields)

resources and political will, she was confident that progress could and would be made. She appreciated the confidence shown in the Institute and believed that the only meaningful response was to endeavour to turn words of hope into action.

78. Mrs. CAPELING-ALAKIJA (Director, United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)) said that the 1990s would be the most demanding decade that the developing world had ever faced. Centres of economic power were shifting, and rapid technological advances and emerging concepts of global governance were opening up new frontiers. But if human development was to take its rightful place in the centre of all development efforts, new forms of leadership were required, and an environment must be created in which it was at last acknowledged that some leaders were, indeed, born women.

79. As the debate on the item had shown, there was a growing understanding that sustainable development could be achieved only if every source of human potential was utilized and if men and women learned to live in harmony with one other and with the ecosystem.

80. It was gratifying to hear delegations speak in support of the United Nations collaborative effort that had produced the publication The World's Women 1970-1990. Words advocating the interests of women, however persuasive, needed the power of numbers in order to influence policy. UNIFEM appreciated that support and looked forward to guidance from delegations with respect to making the update of that publication a regular responsibility of the United Nations. The World's Women provided compelling arguments for increased social monitoring to reveal the terrible inequalities hidden behind the averages for per capita GNP.

81. Collaborative efforts within the United Nations system throughout the 1970s and 1980s had also produced a significant record of achievement as part of the international endeavour to integrate women in mainstream development. Strides had been made in generating resources and raising awareness. Most countries and development institutions had had women-in-development units that had assembled data to provide the conceptual basis for designing programmes incorporating the women's dimension. Equality, peace and development were intrinsically linked to the international movement for women in development. Now that institutional structures had been established, the time had come to focus on the strategic application of efforts in specific contexts and locations.

82. In closing, she urged financial support for the Division for the Advancement of Women at a time when preparations were beginning for the 1995 World Conference on Women. That year would be an important reference point for bringing the women's dimension into global issues, because it marked the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations and the tenth anniversary of the adoption, by global consensus, of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies. It was to be hoped that women in the United Nations Secretariat would be able to

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celebrate the achievement of targets set by the General Assembly and that the Conference would provide concrete solutions to the development problems faced by the millions of women who lived in poverty.

83. Ms. HABACHY (Focal Point for Women, Office of the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management) expressed appreciation on behalf of her colleagues to delegations that had spoken on the issue of the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat. She had taken due note of the useful suggestions made and would relay them to her colleagues in the Office of Human Resources Management and to the Steering Committee for the Improvement of the Status of Women in the Secretariat. Delegations must continue their endeavours to set targets, provide women candidates and give support and advice.

84. Mr. ALI (Iraq), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that Iraq had handed over lists with the names of detained Kuwaitis to the International Committee of the Red Cross. Kuwait had not undertaken the required procedures to ensure their return, on the pretext that it could not distinguish between Kuwaitis and non-Kuwaitis on the list. Iraq had shown a willingness to hand over the persons concerned whenever Kuwait wished to receive them. Many Kuwaitis were waiting to return until living conditions in Kuwait had improved. Iraq was not responsible for Kuwaitis loitering around in first-class hotels in Europe, the United States and elsewhere. Kuwait was simply attempting to mobilize public opinion against Iraq so that the embargo would be prolonged.

85. Ms. AL-KHALID (Kuwait) said that Kuwait had handed over to the International Committee of the Red Cross lists of 2,101 Kuwaitis and non-Kuwaitis, including 214 women and 53 children under the age of 12, who were being held in Iraq. The lists had also contained names of non-Kuwaitis because they too had been removed from Kuwait during the occupation. She called upon Iraq to allow the International Committee of the Red Cross to have immediate access to those prisoners.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.

UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly
FORTY-SIXTH SESSION
Official Records

THIRD COMMITTEE
20th meeting
held on
Wednesday, 23 October 1991
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 20th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. AL-SHAALI (United Arab Emirates)
later: Mr. SLABY (Czechoslovakia)

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Distr. GENERAL
A/C.3/46/SR.20
8 November 1991
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: FRENCH

91-56732 5093S (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 94: SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

- (a) QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE WORLD SOCIAL SITUATION AND TO YOUTH, AGEING, DISABLED PERSONS AND THE FAMILY (A/46/3 (chap. VI, sect. B), A/46/56-E/1991/6 and Corr.1, A/46/137-E/1991/40, A/46/281-E/1991/112, A/46/315, 360, 361, 362 and Corr.1, 414 and 501/Rev.1)

1. The CHAIRMAN recalled that, on 2 October, the Committee had agreed to consider agenda item 94 (b) entitled "Crime prevention and criminal justice" on 9 and 10 December 1991 because the ministerial meeting on the creation of an effective United Nations crime prevention and criminal justice programme was to be held in Paris from 21 to 23 November. After listing the documents before the Committee under agenda item 94 (a), he called on the first speaker.

2. Mr. SOKALSKI (Director, Social Development Division, and Coordinator for the International Year of the Family) said that, in looking at the work accomplished by the United Nations in the social field since the forty-fifth session of the General Assembly, he was struck by a number of considerations. First, the profound changes that had taken place in different parts of the world had created a greater awareness of the importance of the social aspects of development. As the Secretary-General of the United Nations had said in his address to the European Parliament earlier that year, democracy must be backed by a minimum level of well-being in order to make sure that it was not equated with poverty. However, the world was still far away from the reality of such a democracy. He recalled the many problems confronting the international community. The challenge to Governments was clear: to ensure that social policy became a permanent and integral part of national planning. That task was all the more urgent because recent political developments had outpaced developments in the social sphere, making the neglect of social factors all the more manifest. The shift to a market economy had forced Governments to reassess their role as promoters of social policy.

3. At the international level, the subsidiary bodies of the Economic and Social Council that dealt with social development issues had been quick to recognize not only the new challenges but also the extraordinary opportunities of the times. The thirty-second session of the Commission for Social Development had been a notable example in that respect. For the first time, discussions had been entirely devoid of acrimony. The Commission had formulated a number of important suggestions, including a decision intended to strengthen the role of the Secretariat in promoting international cooperation in social development. The decision requested the Secretary-General to identify the United Nations Office at Vienna/Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs as the focal point of social policy research and advisory services for countries undergoing economic and social policy adjustment. That decision, which the Economic and Social Council had approved, would give the United Nations Office at Vienna the status it deserved, particularly in the context of General Assembly resolution 45/248.

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4. Reform measures had also been proposed in the area of crime prevention and criminal justice. In response to the recommendations of the Seventh and the Eighth United Nations Congresses on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, an intergovernmental working group had met at Vienna from 5 to 9 August 1991 in order to develop the framework for an effective international programme on crime prevention and criminal justice. The recommendations of the working group would be discussed at a ministerial meeting to be held in Paris from 21 to 23 November, whose conclusions would be considered by the Committee in December 1991.

5. In recent years, efforts had been made to restructure the work of the United Nations. Although opinions differed on the practical modalities of such reform, it was generally agreed to be necessary. However, one could not help but be struck by the superficial treatment accorded to social sector issues. In general, there was a tendency to confuse the word "social" with the word "humanitarian", or with the notion of human rights. In short, the entire United Nations social sector was in need of a serious reform; previous efforts had failed because they had been based on a selective approach and had not been sufficiently comprehensive.

6. Over the past few years, senior officials of the United Nations Office at Vienna had attempted to draw attention to the precarious resource situation of the Secretariat's social programmes. For example, units responsible for the implementation of programmes in such important spheres as ageing and disability had only three posts each, financed from the regular budget. In addition, it was unacceptable for the Secretariat to be unable to respond to requests from developing countries for advisory services because it did not have sufficient funds to cover travel expenses. Lastly, it was unrealistic to expect the Secretariat to be able to respond to all the requests of the legislative bodies on a zero-growth budget.

7. Despite those difficulties, the Social Development Division had been able to prepare eight reports for consideration by the Committee at the current session. The first of those reports (A/46/414) concerned the Implementation of the Guiding Principles for Developmental Social Welfare Policies and Programmes. The Social Development Division had had great difficulty in obtaining feedback from countries on the implementation of those Guiding Principles, one reason being that many Governments were unaware of their existence. More importantly, those Guiding Principles supposed the launching of very comprehensive programmes covering all aspects of social welfare. As a result, they called for considerable financial outlays that many Governments were unable to make. Recently, however, signs of progress had been noted, particularly at the regional level. Two weeks previously, the Fourth Asian and Pacific Ministerial Conference on Social Welfare and Social Development had been held at Manila. The Conference, which had been organized by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and hosted by the Government of the Philippines, had considered a wide range of social issues covered by the Guiding Principles. The Conference had adopted the Manila

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Declaration, which set forth a regional social development strategy to the year 2000 and beyond. In 1992, a similar meeting would be held in Europe. Contacts had already been made with some Latin American countries with a view to holding a regional conference on the implementation of the Guiding Principles in that region.

8. A review of the progress made towards the implementation of those Principles, had led the Secretary-General to formulate recommendations aimed at capacity-building and strengthening technical cooperation. He drew the Committee's attention to the suggestion concerning the establishment of a mechanism for system-wide coordination aimed at harmonizing efforts in the social field, in accordance with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 42/125.

9. As the preparatory body for the International Year of the Family, the Commission for Social Development had reported on preparations for the Year in document A/46/362. The preparatory process was well under way. Over 40 countries had designated national focal points to liaise with the secretariat of the Year. Close to 30 countries had taken steps in that direction. Lastly, 15 countries - Belarus, Bolivia, Cameroon, Colombia, Greece, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Luxembourg, Mauritania, Morocco, Portugal, Thailand, Turkey, the Philippines, Poland and the USSR - had established such committees at the highest level. Almost 40 countries had made considerable progress on implementing their national programmes for the International Year of the Family.

10. At the international level, 23 United Nations organizations and agencies and 13 other intergovernmental organizations had designated focal points for the International Year. The first inter-agency meeting, which had been held in March 1991, had made it possible to develop a system-wide coordinated approach to the International Year of the Family. As the coordinator for the International Year, he had had particularly valuable discussions with the Council of Europe, the Commission of the European Communities and the Nordic Council of Ministers. He had also recently addressed the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Family Affairs at Lucerne, Switzerland, where he had spoken with a number of government delegations.

11. Notwithstanding those positive results, achieved with limited resources and in a short period of time, the review of the preparatory process had also clearly demonstrated the need for intensified efforts at all levels. The response to the General Assembly's request for contributions to the Voluntary Fund for the International Year of the Family had been extremely modest. Financial support was crucial, in particular to support activities in developing countries.

12. The following year would mark the end of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons. Its most notable achievement had been to make the world

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community more sensitive to disability issues. A long-term strategy was now under preparation, with a view to integrating disabled persons fully into society as equal partners, towards the goal of "a society for all by the year 2010".

13. The report of the Secretary-General on disability issues (A/46/366) reflected that effort to ensure equal opportunity for and full participation of persons with disabilities in society. Technological advances in that regard had never been as promising as they were right then. The following year would be crucial to United Nations efforts to map a strategy for the development of ability and independence.

14. At its forty-fifth session, the General Assembly had endorsed an action programme on ageing for 1992 and beyond. The current United Nations programme in that area focused on three topics: an International Day for the Elderly, observed 1 October, the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the International Plan of Action on Ageing, and the Decade 1992-2001. Among the many activities planned, he mentioned the interregional symposium scheduled for the first half of 1992 in Japan, which would provide an opportunity to set goals for submission to the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session. He sincerely hoped that the General Assembly would provide concrete guidance on priorities and strategies for the next two decades.

15. As part of the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the International Youth Year, the international community was preparing to establish a world programme of action towards the year 2000 and beyond. Global target-setting would be the key element in its preparation. At the end of 1991, a small expert group meeting would be held in Vienna to elaborate a first draft of a programme of action. It was extremely important, however, that the work in the Secretariat should be accompanied by action at the national, regional and global levels, particularly by the establishment of data banks to assist Governments in designing viable youth policies.

16. Turning to crime prevention and criminal justice, he noted that the Committee already had before it two reports on that item and that the third, the note of the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Ministerial Meeting on the Creation of an Effective United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme, would be submitted to the Committee once the Ministerial Meeting was over. The report contained in document A/46/363 outlined the initial steps taken by the Secretary-General to give effect to the resolutions recommended by the Eighth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, in conjunction with the 1992-1997 medium-term plan for the period and the proposed programme budget for 1992-1993. The other report before the Committee dealt with the African Regional Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of

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Offenders. It outlined the historical background of the Institute, emphasized the Institute's funding problems, and urged that the Institute be considered as a special case.

17. Mr. USWATTE-ARATCHI (Department of International Economic and Social Affairs), referring to the interim report of the Secretary-General on the world social situation (A/46/56 and Corr.1), recalled that the Economic and Social Council had requested, among other things, that high priority should be given to an analysis of the main indicators of social progress and standards of living. Such assessment had been lacking in the 1985 and 1989 reports, although the draft framework for the 1993 report on the world social situation as outlined in document A/46/56 included such analysis. However, subsequent to the request of the Council, several United Nations publications had appeared which provided the requested indicators, including the Human Development Report 1991, containing important statistical information on social conditions and standards of living, the annual World Development Report of the World Bank and the Compendium of Social Statistics and Indicators of the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs. Therefore, several sources of information on social indicators and standards of living existed. The 1993 Report on the World Social Situation should be drafted in time for its consideration by the Commission for Social Development at its thirty-third session in February 1993.

18. Work undertaken within the United Nations system to improve quantitative and qualitative indicators on the social situation and standards of living, the subject of document A/46/137, could be divided into four categories. First was the work of the United Nations Statistical Office, which was attempting to develop a system of national accounts, which was being constantly improved. The second set of activities comprised technical assistance to developing countries to generate statistical and other information as close as possible to the previously mentioned system of indicators. A third group of tasks consisted in establishing composite indices combining a widening series of social conditions and standards of living. That was a complex undertaking, as shown in the latest Human Development Report, which had widened the concept to include criteria such as enjoyment of human rights and nature of forms of government. It was not surprising that such an approach to social indicators was controversial, since the concepts on which it was based were still evolving. Fourth, the United Nations system gave wide dissemination to data collected, both through publications and in computer-readable form.

19. Mr. ISAKSSON (Director, UNESCO Liaison Office with the United Nations) drew attention to the report of the Secretary-General on the results of the International Literacy Year (A/46/281). 1990 had been not only a year of mobilization for the cause of literacy and education, but also the first year in the UNESCO 10-year Plan of Action. The purpose of the International Literacy Year was to raise awareness and rally the international community to

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the cause of literacy. The report had been based on responses to a questionnaire received from 59 Member States. The results of that survey, discussed in detail in paragraph 13 of the report, showed that the Member States responding considered the Year to have been a success. Forty-seven per cent rated it as "very successful", 53 per cent as "fairly successful". Twenty per cent of respondents considered that the Year had achieved "excellent" results in increasing governmental action in favour of literacy; another 43 per cent had rated the results in that area as "good" and 25 per cent as "fair". Concerning increased public awareness of the problem of illiteracy and the importance of education, 19 per cent rated the results as "excellent", 60 per cent as "good", 19 per cent "fair". In order to have a more objective measure of the progress achieved, the number of articles on literacy and illiteracy appearing in 130 major national and regional newspapers published in 1990 had been compared to the number published in 1988. (International Year activities had begun in spring 1989.) It had been noted that seven times more articles on literacy appeared in those newspapers at the end of the period under consideration. A substantial majority of responses concerning the four other main objectives of the Year had indicated ratings of "excellent" or "good".

20. As lead organization for International Literacy Year, UNESCO had done its utmost to meet the obligation and responsibility entrusted to it by the General Assembly. Mr. Mayor, Director-General of UNESCO, had stressed many times, however, that the Year owed its success to an enormous collective effort. Nearly 120 Member States had established national committees or structures, the NGOs had been fully mobilized and highly effective, and the mass media had offered constant and indispensable support.

21. He warmly thanked all those who had made financial, material and personnel contributions to the UNESCO International Literacy Year secretariat or who had contributed to International Literacy Year activities in developing countries. He also thanked the National Commissions for UNESCO, which had played a key role in many States in mobilizing the necessary support. Lastly, he paid a tribute to the organizations and agencies of the United Nations system, and particularly to the Secretary-General, for their collaboration.

22. The major event of International Literacy Year had unquestionably been the World Conference on Education for All, held at Jomtien, Thailand, in March 1990 under the joint sponsorship of the World Bank, UNDP, UNESCO and UNICEF, along with, *inter alia*, the United Nations Population Fund, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and the World Health Organization. That event had marked the launching of an international movement to achieve education for all. The movement reflected the central message of International Literacy Year, namely that education was the responsibility of all and was the key to the world's future.

23. The General Assembly had played a vital role in promoting literacy and basic education. It had proclaimed International Literacy Year in response to

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an appeal from the UNESCO General Conference in 1985. UNESCO hoped that the General Assembly would continue its close monitoring of the progress of literacy and basic education and that it would take the necessary measures to support the international movement launched by the Year and by the World Conference. The Education Commission of the UNESCO General Conference was considering a draft resolution which requested the General Assembly to conduct, at its fiftieth session, in 1995, a mid-decade review of the progress made and problems encountered in the struggle to eliminate illiteracy. Many programmes and policies had been launched or were being planned, and it would be useful, in 1995, to renew the commitments made and to make the necessary corrections so that the second half of the decade might witness unprecedented progress in that area. Lastly, UNESCO hoped that the United Nations system would participate as dynamically in the follow-up activities as it had in the Year and the World Conference themselves.

24. Mr. HOEGH (Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Promotion of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons) said he regretted that arrangements had not been made to allow the hearing-impaired to follow the debate; he hoped that that need would be met the following year.

25. One year before the end of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons, much remained to be done to improve the situation of the disabled.

26. Efforts to increase awareness of the needs of the disabled and of the many problems they encountered had been fairly successful, but the potential contribution of the disabled to society had not yet been fully recognized. Yet such persons could be active contributors to the socio-economic growth of their countries. In that regard, all Governments should make better use of the Tallinn Guidelines, contained in the report of the International Meeting on Human Resources in the Field of Disability.

27. He was pleased to note that many Governments had enacted legislation to provide for services, programmes and special integration measures for disabled persons. It was important, however, to ensure that the needs and problems of the disabled were systematically taken into account in all areas, including health, social affairs, education, employment and transportation. That was the only way to achieve the goal which the General Assembly had set for disabled persons the previous year: "a society for all by the year 2010".

28. Equal opportunity for all required equal access to education, which was impossible if disabled students did not have the benefit of appropriate facilities, particularly adaptive devices. The same considerations applied to employment. Governments must give more serious consideration to the practical aspects of integrating disabled persons. No country could afford to overlook the human resources represented by disabled citizens. He welcomed the Swedish initiative of elaborating standard rules on the equalization of opportunities for disabled persons, and urged all member States to follow that example. All Governments should support disabled persons' organizations and should work

(Mr. Hoegh)

with them to develop an integrated, multi-year plan of action to address the needs and concerns of the disabled in all areas of social and cultural life.

29. Currently, everyone recognized the importance of telecommunications and the vital role they played in daily life. Many forgot, however, that millions of people did not have access to telecommunications because of their disabilities. Communications ministries must address those problems. The recent event at Geneva "Telecom '91", had shown what needed to be done in that regard. Immediate attention must be given to making appropriate prosthetic devices available to disabled persons at affordable prices. Millions of disabled persons were unable to integrate themselves into community life for lack of such devices. He recommended that countries which had not yet done so should immediately become parties to the Protocol to the Agreement on the Importation of Educational, Scientific and Cultural Materials, adopted by UNESCO at Florence in 1950, at the fifth session of its General Conference.

30. He was pleased that millions of disabled persons had been able to integrate themselves into their communities, to become more self-reliant and to contribute more actively to society as a result of the training they had received and the opportunities they had enjoyed through their involvement in projects developed by disabled persons' organizations. Unfortunately, many of those relatively low-cost projects, which could lead to great progress at the local level, were not implemented for lack of funding. He appealed to all Governments to support the initiatives of the disabled community at the national level and to contribute to the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons.

31. One effective way of fostering understanding of the potential of disabled persons was to organize national awareness days or weeks. One such programme had been successfully developed by Canada and adopted by other countries. Public awareness of the situation of disabled persons would greatly speed up the integration process.

32. The progress made to date was largely a result of the work of national disabled persons' organizations. Such organizations understood the problems best and often knew of effective and economical solutions. However, those organizations required funding, and Governments had a duty to help them. The disabled community itself had done its utmost to raise funds. Recently, for example, the Norwegian organization New Life had raised more than \$15 million in a single day. That example could be followed in other industrialized countries.

33. Disabled persons could do much for themselves, as long as they were kept informed. Governments must therefore ensure that information was provided in a manner which was accessible to all sectors of society, including the hearing-impaired and the blind. Modern technology made such action possible.

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(Mr. Hoegh)

34. At the forty-fifth session of the General Assembly, the Third Committee had adopted a recommendation to proceed from awareness-raising to action. In 1982, the General Assembly had adopted a World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, which had been developed by the disabled themselves. He strongly urged all Governments to review the extent to which the Programme of Action had been implemented or neglected, and to take appropriate steps. Disabled persons not only deserved, but had the right, to enjoy the same benefits as other members of society. Governments were responsible for translating that principle into reality.

35. He sincerely thanked the Secretary-General of the United Nations, who, throughout his term, had demonstrated concern for the needs and problems of disabled persons. It was to be hoped that his successor would show the same commitment to that cause.

36. Mr. VAN SCHAIK (Netherlands), speaking on behalf of the 12 States members of the European Community noted that living conditions for many people, especially in developing countries, had deteriorated since 1990 as a result of man-made or natural disasters. Continued international vigilance was needed in order to deal effectively with such disasters. In that connection, the Twelve had proposed an initiative aimed at strengthening the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance provided by the United Nations.

37. The past decade had seen far-reaching social and political changes, as repressive, authoritarian regimes had given way to more open political systems in many countries, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe. That was proof of a growing awareness of the relationship between democracy, human rights and sustainable development, a phenomenon which was also evident in developing countries, inter alia, in Africa.

38. The Second United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), held in September 1990, had again stressed the difficulties faced by LDCs and their need for a partnership with the donor community. The European Community had over many years forged strong ties of partnership with countries signatories to the Lomé Convention, two thirds of which were LDCs. LDCs also received special benefits under the European Community's generalized system of preferences. Aware of the common responsibility of donor and recipient countries to lessen the burden of the debt problem, the Twelve recognized that a still greater effort would be required from donors, both quantitatively and qualitatively.

39. Structural adjustment programmes had serious implications for the poorest strata of society. Accordingly, the Twelve attached great importance to the social, cultural and human dimensions of development cooperation. They emphasized partnership not only between Governments but also between Governments and non-governmental organizations, and also grass-roots activities. In view of the large numbers of women in the poorest strata of society and the complex responsibilities of women in raising new generations,

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(Mr. Van Schaik, Netherlands)

policies must take their specific needs into account. With the Lomé Convention and the cooperation agreements concluded with Mediterranean, Asian and Latin American countries, the Twelve had given a clear indication of the priority they accorded to an appropriate framework for dynamic, balanced cooperation activities with the developing countries.

40. The Twelve fully supported the activities of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, including the implementation of the Guiding Principles for Developmental Social Welfare Policies and Programmes in the Near Future, as the focal point in that area. Of course, that required that the human and financial resources allocated to the Centre under the regular budget be made available to it during the medium-term planning period 1992-1997. The Centre should also contribute to the social dimension of the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade, without prejudice to other operational activities in that field to be implemented by the relevant programmes and specialized agencies. Lastly, the growing awareness of the social dimension of development could not but strengthen the role of the Commission for Social Development.

41. Mention should be made of Economic and Social Council decision 1991/230 requesting the Secretary-General to carry out consultations with all States Members of the Organization on the possibility of convening a world summit for social development. The Twelve were willing to contribute to those consultations and looked forward to the report which the Secretary-General would be submitting to the Council in 1992.

42. With the single European market due to become a reality, the Twelve had concentrated on the social dimension of their policies. One result had been the adoption in 1989 of the Community Charter of the Fundamental Social Rights of Workers on the basis of which an action programme had been formulated which emphasized, inter alia, social aspects in the fields of employment, improvement of living and working conditions, equal opportunities, youth, and elderly and disabled persons.

43. The integration of youth in society was essential for the future development of society. It involved the active participation, on an equal basis, of young men and women in political, economic, social and cultural life. Policies for youth had been on the agenda of the Commission for Social Development and the General Assembly for many years. The International Youth Year in 1985 had highlighted the importance of that question. However, follow-up activities to the Year needed to be strengthened, with emphasis on practical programmes in the fields of education, training, culture, sports and welfare. Programmes involving international and national youth organizations should be implemented, based on cooperation between youth in developed and developing countries. Channels of communication between the United Nations system and youth organizations world wide also needed to be improved. The tenth anniversary of the Year would be an occasion to refocus attention on youth issues and stimulate renewed action at all levels. In that connection,

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the Twelve welcomed the proposals put forward by the Secretary-General (A/46/360) for the preparation of a draft world youth programme of action towards the year 2000 and beyond. Youth issues would also be taken up by the open-ended ad hoc working group of the Commission for Social Development to be established at the Commission's thirty-third session.

44. European youth programmes were being developed to promote the mobility of young people: students and workers. Projects for the unemployed and less favoured groups of young people were being funded by the European Social Fund. In order to create better mutual understanding among youth in different parts of Europe, the European Community had set up an exchange programme for young people living in its member States.

45. As a result of improvements in medical care, elderly people accounted for an increasingly large share of the world's population. Such people could make a very useful and practical contribution to society. In the industrialized countries, population ageing created a need for additional resources and amenities. Policies were directed towards enabling elderly people to live independently as long as they could. Furthermore, measures must be taken to improve the working conditions of elderly workers and to combat age-stereotyping in the workplace and the labour market. The Twelve were paying increased attention to policies on ageing, with emphasis on full community participation by senior citizens. They had also formulated a plan of action on ageing for the period 1991-1993. In developing countries, improvements in medical care and health services were also increasing longevity, confronting the Governments of those countries with similar challenges.

46. In its resolution 37/51, the General Assembly had endorsed the International Plan of Action on Ageing. Despite its usefulness, however, the Plan had not been adequately implemented by all Member States. The tenth anniversary of the Plan, in 1992, offered an opportunity to review the progress made. The report of the Secretary-General on international cooperation on ageing (A/46/361) provided useful strategies for the coming years. The Economic and Social Council had recommended that the General Assembly devote four plenary meetings at its forty-seventh session to considering the follow-up to the Plan and celebrating its tenth anniversary. The Twelve hoped that special attention would be paid at the session to intergenerational solidarity and the integration of elderly people in society, which were also the themes of the European Year of the Elderly in 1993.

47. Although the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons was drawing to a close, the question of equalizing opportunities for disabled persons remained highly topical. While it was true that the Decade had marked a turning-point in the international community's awareness of the situation of disabled persons, particularly in the developing countries, the needs of handicapped women and children continued to be substantial. The Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs should play a catalytic role in that regard.

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(Mr. Van Schaik, Netherlands)

48. The European Community welcomed resolution 32/2 of the Commission for Social Development concerning the establishment of an ad hoc open-ended working group to elaborate standard rules on the equalization of opportunities for disabled persons (E/1991/26-E/CN.5/1991/9). It hoped that the working group would prepare concrete guidelines for Governments.

49. The main objective of national policies in that field should be the full integration of the disabled into the community and their active participation in political, economic, social and cultural life. Associations for disabled people had an important role to play, in both the industrialized and the developing countries. Governments should encourage such associations and cooperate with them.

50. The Twelve attached great importance to the various initiatives undertaken by the United Nations and other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations as well as States to follow up the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons. The European Community, for its part, had launched the Helios Programme, which sought to bring about the social and economic integration of disabled persons. The Community was willing to share its experience with Members of the United Nations, particularly with respect to access of handicapped persons to buildings and public transport and the construction of adequate housing - all factors which facilitated the integration and independence of such persons.

51. The European Community looked forward to the adequate preparation of the International Year of the Family. Family structures and the sharing of responsibilities by men and women were changing. That issue merited attention, taking duly into account the socio-cultural context of each country. The European Community would play an active role in the preparatory work for the Year; it called on the Secretary-General to ensure that due attention was paid to migrant families and to technical assistance to developing countries in formulating action programmes for the welfare of the poorest families in urban and rural areas.

52. Mr. Slaby (Czechoslovakia) took the Chair.

53. Mrs. ALVAREZ (Dominican Republic) recalled that the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization (A/46/1) stressed the importance of social issues to the mission of the United Nations. It was truly a mistake to assume that social issues ranked second after political issues, for unresolved social problems very quickly became political problems. It was with that in mind that her country endorsed the convening of a world summit for social development.

54. Similarly, it was unfortunate that the new phenomenon of the ageing of the world population, which was assuming vast proportions, currently received less attention than other issues, such as the greenhouse effect. As the report of the Secretary-General on the question (A/46/361) indicated, from

(Mrs. Alvarez, Dominican Republic)

1950 to 2025, the world's population of 60 years of age and over would have increased from 200 million to 1.2 billion, or from 8 to 14 per cent of the global population. The phenomenon would be even more dramatic in poor countries. In 1975, people over 60 years of age had accounted for 50 per cent of the population of the developing countries, a figure which would increase to 75 per cent in 2025. Moreover, between 1980 and 2020, the number of octogenarians would have doubled in the more developed regions and would have increased fivefold in the developing countries. That phenomenon would have major repercussions in many areas, including income, housing and health care. It would create a demand for social services that no country would be able to satisfy unless steps were taken immediately to deal with the situation. The first task was to acknowledge that older people could play an important role in society, as they had done before urbanization and modernization had undermined the family, focused attention on youth and devalued the traditions and wisdom gained from years of living. The United Nations already had taken steps to that end. It had organized the first International Day for the Elderly on 1 October, thus heralding a new level of awareness on the topic. Even more significant, the General Assembly currently was considering a draft set of United Nations Principles for Older Persons and would devote several plenary meetings to the question of ageing.

55. New resources must be mobilized on behalf of the elderly. However, economic growth was declining in the countries of the third world, where social security programmes were a luxury which remained out of reach. That explained the scant success of measures such as the International Plan of Action on Ageing, which suffered from chronic underfunding and viewed the elderly mainly as victims and as a burden to society. To deal effectively with the phenomenon of ageing, it was necessary to stop viewing the elderly as obstacles to development. The Secretary-General had adopted the correct approach in his report on international cooperation on ageing for 1992 and beyond by calling for new workable strategies which focused not on age but on the contribution which each person could make to society. That new concept of "productive" ageing viewed the elderly as repositories of a lifetime of knowledge and experience and a national resource which societies should use to their advantage. In some developing countries, the elderly already had begun to contribute to national development with the establishment, supported by modest investments, of small businesses ranging from child care to word processing. Such self-help projects increased the income of older people while enabling them to become agents of development of their countries.

56. The United Nations, for its part, should create new institutional mechanisms to encourage the independence of older people, a difficult task since there was no precedent in that area and ageing was a phenomenon that cut across all generations, all countries and all sectors of economic and political life. To achieve that goal, the United Nations had begun to create new forms of cooperation with non-governmental organizations and the private sector, seeking to obtain the maximum benefit with a minimum of resources. The Banyan Fund Association, which had been established very recently in Paris

(Mrs. Alvarez, Dominican Republic)

under the patronage of the United Nations, was an example of that new approach. The Fund raised capital from the private sector and other non-governmental organizations to finance projects enabling older people to become masters of their own fate and contribute to the development of their countries.

57. Mr. Al-Shaali (United Arab Emirates) took the Chair.

58. Ms. LISSAU-JENSEN (Denmark), speaking as the representative of the Danish Youth Council and as a member of the Danish delegation to the United Nations, discussed questions relating to youth. Young people currently faced many problems, some of which concerned only their own countries, while others, such as unemployment, hunger, lack of services or the need to flee from their native land, were global in scope. A key factor, which was essential if those problems were to be solved, was participation. It was therefore gratifying to note the wave of democratization that had swept the world in recent years. However, democracy was more than demonstrations in the streets; it was also the work of building a society in which every individual had the right to freedom of expression. The importance of associations could not be overemphasized in that regard, for they provided a way for individuals and, in particular, young people, to forge an opinion and exert influence. Although individualism was gaining ground in some countries, in others, unfortunately, the right to form associations was denied. Democracy could be established on a solid foundation and could foster development only if that fundamental right was respected. Fortunately, a positive trend in that regard could be observed in many parts of the world, in particular, in Eastern Europe and Latin America. The organization to which she belonged sought to contribute to the establishment of democracy in various regions through the exchange of experience. In that connection, recent events had demonstrated the importance of the role of the United Nations in dealing with repressive regimes and as a mediator in world conflicts.

59. The Convention on the Rights of the Child had been adopted by the General Assembly at its forty-fourth session, and it was essential for its provisions to be implemented in concrete terms. The protection of children's rights went hand in hand with development. To young people the future looked terrifying. In particular, it was difficult to see how the countries of the third world could solve their enormous debt problem. At the global level, the need to establish a genuine "partnership in development" should be a priority theme of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992.

60. Young people were particularly aware of the need to save the planet Earth. They also realized that that would require changes in the way people lived. Water and energy consumption in the developed countries must be reduced. Sustainable development was contingent upon help from the industrialized countries and measures to preserve the environment. She urged that non-governmental organizations, particularly youth organizations, should attend the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

(Ms. Lissau-Jensen, Denmark)

61. She noted with regret that, although resolutions on youth were adopted year after year by the General Assembly, only a few countries included young people in their delegations to that body. It was essential that young people should take part in decision-making in international forums.

62. Mrs. MBELLA NGOMBA (Cameroon) said that her country well understood the trials of the developing countries, which had until recently been victims of colonialism and were now trying to ensure a better life for their people in peace, freedom and dignity. As the Director of the Social Development Division had said, democracy must be backed by a minimum level of well-being. Unfortunately, for the developing countries the preceding decade had been one of stagnation in the development of human and material resources. In Africa, where 29 countries had joined the ranks of the least developed, the situation was particularly serious. By the year 2000, sub-Saharan Africa would have the largest number of people at poverty level in the world. Social instability combined with the economic crisis threatened the very foundations of the emerging democracies. Efforts made thus far to reverse that trend - technical assistance programmes, development decades, the international development strategies, the Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States, North-South negotiations and, more recently, human resource development programmes - had failed to produce results. The developing countries still suffered from deteriorating terms of trade and barriers which denied their commodities access to developed-country markets. In addition, the debt burden had forced many developing countries to become net exporters of capital, and the international trading system was unfavourable to them. For all those reasons, the social situation in the developing countries had deteriorated to such an extent that it was difficult to see what the international community could do to remedy it. In addition to a change of strategy, what was required was a new political will to go beyond declarations of intent and undertake practical action in the areas of education, training, job creation and the identification of needs of special groups in individual societies and ways of meeting them. A world summit for social development would provide an opportunity to demonstrate the new political will. She hoped that the General Assembly would endorse the decision of the Commission for Social Development to make the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs the focal point for social policy research and advisory services for countries undergoing economic and social policy adjustment.

63. Cameroon supported the conclusions of the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the Guiding Principles for Developmental Social Welfare Policies and Programmes in the Near Future (A/46/414) which emphasized the role of the family and the community, and endorsed the decision to create an inter-agency task force to promote system-wide harmonisation and collaboration, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 42/125. She also welcomed the work that had been done on establishing a global information network for the collection, dissemination and exchange of information, on the implementation of the Guiding Principles.

(Mrs. Mbella Ngomba, Cameroon)

64. With regard to the International Year of the Family, which would be observed in 1994, Cameroon was one of 15 countries that had set up national coordination committees for the Year at the highest political level. A coordinated approach which involved non-governmental organizations was needed in order to draw up national, regional and international programmes. She welcomed the negotiations being conducted with interested Governments on the secondment of national staff for the preparation of the International Year of the Family and called upon member States to contribute generously to the Voluntary Trust Fund for the International Year of the Family.

65. On the subject of the disabled, she noted current efforts to take action-oriented approaches to equalizing opportunities and fully integrating the disabled in all aspects of social life by the year 2000. She looked forward to the work of the expert group charged with elaborating a legal instrument and establishing an institutional framework in that area. UNESCO was to be commended for sponsoring the development of educational programmes on disabled children, as was UNICEF, which was giving priority to the early detection and prevention of childhood impairment.

66. She concluded by emphasizing once again the need to improve living conditions by democratizing national, regional and international institutions, by undertaking social and economic reforms while moving towards a market economy, by adopting unilateral or multilateral measures for disarmament and by promoting regional integration. It would take \$20 billion to implement the provisions of the Declaration and Plan of Action adopted at the World Summit for Children in New York; as that was virtually the equivalent of the world's military expenditure in 10 days, the importance of the "peace dividend" was evident. Clearly, then the only way to improve living standards for all mankind by the year 2000 was by reorienting world priorities towards social development.

67. Mrs. ZIKRY (Egypt) thanked the Secretary-General for his interim report on the world social situation (A/46/56). She noted, however, that it did not take adequately into account the deteriorating economic and social conditions of the developing countries, or reflect the concerns of those countries. Social indicators must be improved and developed further and suggestions made for viable solutions. The organizations of the United Nations system must endeavour to study in greater depth the social situation of the developing countries, which were obliged to adopt structural adjustment policies that had forced many of them to reduce their social services expenditure, to the detriment of programmes. The effects of those adjustment policies were disastrous, particularly for the vulnerable groups of society. The social cost of such policies must be contained; moreover, international economic relations must be reviewed in the light of the principle of "shared responsibility", as suggested by the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Vienna.

(Mrs. Zikry, Egypt)

68. The responsibility of the international community to support the developing countries' efforts to solve their grave economic and social problems had been emphasized in many international forums. Intensive cooperation was called for between United Nations bodies, donors and international financial institutions to provide additional financial and technical resources to help the countries of the third world face their debt problems.

69. While significant political changes were taking place on the international scene, social and economic problems continued to worsen; the major challenges of the 1990s remained the eradication of poverty and hunger, a more equitable distribution of income and the development of human resources.

70. The Egyptian Government was endeavouring, in its negotiations with international financial institutions, to pursue an adjustment strategy that was at once efficient and humane. While the integration of all human resources was a common goal of all countries, it was an imperative for the developing countries, where 50 per cent of the population was under 20 years of age and women were still not fully integrated in the development process. Aware of that fact, Egypt was paying due attention to the development of all sectors of its population, and especially youth. At the national level, significant measures had been taken in a number of national projects to ensure the full participation of youth in building up society. Periodic seminars were held to raise public awareness of the dangers facing young people in the modern world, such as drug abuse, disease, AIDS and the deterioration of the environment. Strong emphasis was also placed on sport, as well as on dialogue and discussion between specialists and young people on social and economic issues of global concern.

71. At the international level, Egypt had always supported the youth-related initiatives of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs. Evidence of that support was provided by Egypt's sponsorship each year of the resolution on policies and programmes involving youth. With reference to the Secretary-General's report on that subject (A/46/360), her delegation believed that the world youth programme of action towards the year 2000 and beyond should be concerned with the same themes as the International Youth Year, namely participation, development and peace. It agreed that the programme's aim should be to provide practical and long-term guidelines at the national and regional levels. The United Nations Decade for Youth should also be more action-oriented. Support should be given to the recommendation of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) that refugee youth should be included as a priority issue in the draft world youth programme.

72. Egypt's commitment to young people applied equally to other sections of society, in particular the aged. Accordingly, Egypt had supported the activities proposed under the action programme on ageing for 1992 and beyond and had endeavoured to take the increasing number of elderly people into

(Mrs. Zikry, Egypt)

account in its policies. Egypt also had a strong interest in family issues, since it was through the family that moral values were perpetuated. It would therefore make every effort to prepare for and observe the International Year of the Family in 1994.

73. The idea of convening a world summit on social development was an unprecedented initiative which would provide an occasion for an exchange of views and the development of a joint position on social issues. Her delegation hoped that the changing international climate would be conducive to concerted efforts to improve the situation in that area.

74. Mr. KRENKEL (Austria), supported by Mrs. BOUKADOUM (Algeria) and Mr. ZHANG Jun (China) said that he had submitted a question in writing concerning Economic and Social Council resolution 1991/16 and the implications of that resolution for the work of the Third Committee. He asked whether the representative of the Secretary-General was in a position to give a reply.

75. Ms. KAMAL (Secretary of the Committee) said that the question had been referred to the competent service for a reply.

AGENDA ITEM 92: ELIMINATION OF RACISM AND RACIAL DISCRIMINATION (continued)
(A/C.3/46/L.8, A/C.3/46/L.9, A/C.3/46/L.11*)

76. Mr. STUGAR (Yugoslavia) introduced draft resolution A/C.3/46/L.8 on behalf of its sponsors, who had been joined by Canada and New Zealand. The work of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination merited special attention: the Committee had made a significant contribution to the activities carried out by the United Nations in the context of the Second Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination. The Committee's financial situation was, however, critical, owing to the failure of certain States parties to comply with their financial obligations under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. For the sixth consecutive year no lasting solution had been found to the problem. The States parties had therefore been asked to pay their outstanding contributions before 1 February 1992 and to explore, as a matter of priority, ways of establishing a more secure basis for the future financing of all the Committee's costs. The sponsors hoped that the draft resolution would be adopted without a vote.

77. Mrs. GERRE-EGZIABHER (Ethiopia) introduced draft resolution A/C.3/46/L.9 on behalf of the Group of African States. The draft dealt in a detailed manner with the activities of the Second Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination. Resolutions on the same topic had been adopted by consensus in previous years, and she hoped that that would be the case in 1991.

78. Miss FUNDUFUNDA (Zambia) introduced draft resolution A/C.3/46/L.11*, and announced that Angola, Burkina Faso, Iraq, Mozambique, Namibia, Uganda and Viet Nam had also become sponsors. She read out the key operative paragraphs

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(Miss Fundafunda, Zambia)

of the resolution and said that the sponsors hoped it would receive broad support from the Committee.

AGENDA ITEM 93: RIGHT OF PEOPLES TO SELF-DETERMINATION (continued)
(A/C.3/46/L.10, A/C.3/46/L.12, A/C.3/46/L.13)

79. Mrs. GEBRE-EGZIABHER (Ethiopia) introduced draft resolution A/C.3/46/L.10 on behalf of the Group of African States. The draft focused on the total eradication of apartheid in South Africa and on the exercise by the Palestinian people of its inalienable right to self-determination. In preparing the draft, the Group of African States had taken the developments in southern Africa and the Middle East into account. In addition, some delegations had put forward suggestions on which consultations were being held. In view of those consultations and the events of the past year, the sponsors hoped that the draft would receive broad support from the members of the Committee.

80. Mr. HUSSAIN (Pakistan) introduced draft resolution A/C.3/46/L.12, whose sponsors had been joined by Guatemala and Kuwait. The text was almost identical to that of resolution 45/131, adopted without a vote by the General Assembly on the recommendation of the Third Committee, which had approved the text by consensus. A few minor changes had been made to take account of the most recent resolutions of the General Assembly and the Commission on Human Rights. The sponsors hoped that, as in previous years, the draft would be adopted without a vote.

81. Mr. GALANDACHI (Nigeria) introduced draft resolution A/C.3/46/L.13 and announced that Angola, Colombia, Cuba, Mexico, Peru, the United Republic of Tanzania, Viet Nam, Zambia and Zimbabwe had become sponsors. Noting that changes were taking place in South Africa, in particular the repeal of the acts instituting apartheid, the dialogue between the representatives of the black majority and the Government and the signing of a peace agreement aimed at stemming the violence between rival factions, he pointed out that mercenaries had been involved in almost all the disturbances. The report of the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights (E/CN.4/1991/14) was very informative in that regard. The use of mercenaries threatened to derail the peace process and undermine the considerable progress achieved in the struggle against apartheid. The sponsors of the resolution were equally disturbed by the continued use of mercenaries in other regions of the world, in particular against peoples fighting for their self-determination. Recourse to mercenaries could not be tolerated under any circumstances.

82. After outlining the thrust of the draft resolution, he explained that amendments had been made to the original text which would appear in the revised text. He expressed the hope that the draft resolution would be adopted by consensus.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.

UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly
FORTY-SIXTH SESSION
Official Records

THIRD COMMITTEE
21st meeting
held on
Thursday, 24 October 1991
at 3 p.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 21st MEETING

Chairman: Mr. AL-SHAALI (United Arab Emirates)

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AGENDA ITEM 94: SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT (continued)

- (a) QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE WORLD SOCIAL SITUATION AND TO YOUTH,
AGEING, DISABLED PERSONS AND THE FAMILY (continued)

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Distr. GENERAL
A/C.3/46/SR.21
29 October 1991

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 94: SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT (continued)

(a) QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE WORLD SOCIAL SITUATION AND TO YOUTH, AGEING, DISABLED PERSONS AND THE FAMILY (continued) (A/46/3 (chap. VI, sect. B), A/46/56-E/1991/6 and Corr.1, A/46/137-E/1991/40, A/46/281-E/1991/112, A/46/315, 360, 361, 362 and Corr.1, 366, 414, 501/Rev.1)

1. Mrs. SAMONTE-LIMJUCO (Philippines) said that her delegation supported the UNESCO Plan of Action for Literacy. Illiteracy could be vanquished, but the pace of progress must be stepped up significantly if the goals of international action plans were to be achieved. Basic education for all was not only a human right, it was also the cornerstone of human development.

2. Her delegation subscribed to the objectives of the International Youth Year. The draft world youth programme of action towards the year 2000 and beyond should focus upon underprivileged youth, youth in poor rural and urban sectors, disabled youth and young refugees and migrant workers. It would be desirable to involve youth in environmental concerns and to infuse the programme with a sense of urgency.

3. Her Government noted with concern that, as pointed out in the Secretary-General's report on international cooperation on ageing (A/46/361), in the 75 years from 1950 to 2025, the world's elderly population was expected to increase from 200 million to 1.2 billion, or from 8 to 14 per cent of the total global population, and that the developing countries were projected to age more quickly than the developed countries had in the past. It was imperative that a practical strategy should be drafted to improve the International Plan of Action on Ageing.

4. Notwithstanding the need to raise awareness for the concerns of ageing, the resources being spent for commemorating the tenth anniversary of the World Assembly on Ageing in 1992 might be better used in the United Nations Trust Fund for Ageing, for which contributions had been declining, and might also be channelled towards research projects for the benefit of the elderly, for example on Alzheimer's disease. Her delegation praised the newly-established Banyan Fund Association: A Word Fund for Ageing, which promoted activities within the context of the International Plan of Action on Ageing that would enable the elderly to remain independent and contribute to society.

5. Her Government supported the proclamation of 1994 as the International Year of the Family, and a national programme of action was being formulated to celebrate the year in the Philippines. On the plight of the disabled, the United Nations must take practical steps to promote their well-being, particularly in developing countries.

(Mrs. Samonte-Limjuco, Philippines)

6. In the Philippines, the dignity of the human person was enshrined in the Constitution, which mandated the promotion of a just social order, guaranteed respect for human rights and recognized the sanctity of the family. In 1987, the Family Code of the Philippines had been promulgated in order to bring the provisions of the Civil Code on marriage and family relations more into line with Filipino customs, values and ideals to reflect contemporary trends and conditions. The Constitution recognized the role of young people in nation-building and protected their physical, moral, spiritual, intellectual and social well-being and ensured the right to health and to a balanced and salubrious environment. In pursuance of the constitutional mandate to further social justice, the 1988-1992 medium-term plan had set national development goals, giving particular attention to employment, especially in rural areas, and also focusing on education, health, nutrition, family planning, housing and community services.

7. Her Government's development efforts had yielded encouraging results. There had been a marked improvement in health care and housing, and school enrolment had reached a record level. Recently, however, the Philippines had sustained a number of setbacks. Two coup attempts had been made, a severe earthquake had levelled major cities in the north, a typhoon had struck and the eruption of Mount Pinatubo had wrought widespread destruction, displacing hundreds of thousands and causing major damage to the economy. Her Government expressed its gratitude to those who had provided assistance to the Philippines at a time of great need.

8. Mrs. KABA-CAMARA (Côte d'Ivoire) said that social development was closely related to economic development, and no social progress could be made in a stagnant economy. In Africa, economic recovery plans such as the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery had not produced the desired results, despite commendable economic and political restructuring efforts by many Governments. The structural adjustment policies recommended by IMF and the World Bank were intended to restore economic growth through balanced budgets, but a drastic reduction in social spending in order to decrease Government expenditure had brought about a severe decline in the standard of living, particularly for the most vulnerable groups. Falling commodity prices had drastically reduced financial flows to Africa, and the debt burden had undermined any hope of economic recovery. The weakened social fabric had thus given rise to discontent and political instability in many countries.

9. Côte d'Ivoire had not been spared, as a result of a significant drop in the prices of coffee and cocoa, and unemployment had increased considerably. Nevertheless, the Government had attempted to spare the education and health sectors in its budget cuts.

(Mrs. Kaba-Camara, Côte d'Ivoire)

10. The changing perception of development among international authorities was encouraging as evidenced by the emphasis on the human being in the 1991 World Development Report. Her delegation welcomed the report on improving quantitative and qualitative indicators on social conditions and standards of living (A/46/137), in particular the project on the social dimensions of adjustment in sub-Saharan Africa. In Côte d'Ivoire, human well-being was the ultimate goal of the Government's development activities. Despite the economic crisis, the disabled, retired persons and families continued to receive government assistance, and several private initiatives in that area had begun.

11. The extended family played a key role in Ivoirian society. In educating children, caring for the elderly and disabled, and providing assistance to impoverished members through a social-security system based on family solidarity, the family remained its most important and precious institution. The erosion of family values as a result of economic problems was of great concern; therefore, her delegation attached great importance to the 1994 International Year of the Family and the preparatory activities described in document A/46/362. Her delegation deplored the lack of resources available for implementing the plans of action on ageing, the disabled and literacy. It appealed to Member States to increase contributions to special funds encouraging initiatives for Africa.

12. Sadly, those who had encouraged the democracy movement in third-world countries were unable to sustain those fragile democracies by substantial contributions to their development. In an interdependent world, it was an illusion that a minority could base its prosperity on the misery of most of mankind. There was still time to put aside North-South rivalries based on national and regional interests and to formulate a universal policy with the well-being of all humanity as its goal.

13. Mr. HANSEN (Canada) said that Canada had made great strides on disability-related issues and the previous month had launched a five-year national strategy for the integration of persons with disabilities with the goals of equal access, economic integration and effective participation through active partnerships involving Governments, the private sector and the disabled community. Part of its future strategy was to seek linkages at the international level, such as INDEPENDENCE 92, an international congress and exposition on disability scheduled for April 1992 on the theme of self-determination by persons with disabilities. Its purpose was to promote independent living for every person with a disability, regardless of age, sex or race. Representation from Governments, business, industry and world organizations from over 80 countries was expected.

14. The congress would focus on community and independent living, economic independence, education, equality, full participation, social change strategies and technology. As part of the observance of the conclusion of the Decade of Disabled Persons in 1992, INDEPENDENCE 92 would build on awareness

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(Mr. Hansen, Canada)

raised during the Decade and turn it into concrete action. It would celebrate the achievements of persons with disabilities and reflect on the success of the Decade, but would also explore and identify current and future needs.

15. Canada would host and fund a meeting of experts in conjunction with the congress, in response to Economic and Social Council resolution 1991/9, with the primary objective of drawing up a long-term strategy to implement the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons. The expert group would need to consider legislation and governing mechanisms, community-based rehabilitation, independent living, human rights and economic independence, and to identify initiatives which could contribute to the integration of people with disabilities appropriate to particular environments. Its other goal should be to recommend a mechanism to coordinate and monitor activities beyond 1992.

16. Mr. JOUSHAN (Afghanistan) said he regretted that the significant progress made in implementing the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons had not extended to the developing countries. His country had over 1.5 million disabled persons including a half million victims of the long war, needing the assistance of national and international humanitarian organizations. His Government had put aside political considerations and was using all its limited resources to attempt to relieve their sufferings.

17. His Government had taken a number of measures in implementation of the World Programme of Action, including establishment of a national association for the handicapped and disabled which served all, regardless of political affiliation or cause of disability. It had also cleared mines and other unexploded ordnance to prevent further disability. A special assistance fund for the disabled had been established, and legislation on compensation of those disabled in the line of duty and on the rights and privileges of disabled persons was being drafted.

18. His delegation expressed appreciation for the valuable support of Governments and international organizations which had assisted in the treatment of war casualties, especially children. The humanitarian activities of the International Committee of the Red Cross deserved special mention. Its orthopedic centres reached only a small number of the disabled, but represented a very good beginning. A UNDP consultative commission for rehabilitation also had been established in Kabul to provide employment and support services. His Government would welcome further help in job creation and financial, scientific and technical assistance to expand prosthetic centres. His delegation endorsed efforts to shift the focus of the United Nations disability programme from awareness-raising to action with the aim of achieving a society for all.

19. Ms. RUGTVEDT (Norway), speaking as a youth delegate, emphasized the importance of having young people participate in political decision-making in all countries. Nations must send more young people as delegates to the

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(Ms. Rugtvedt, Norway)

General Assembly: currently only three nations had representatives from youth organizations in their official delegations.

20. Young people often led the struggle for democracy and respect for human rights, and it was important that their voices should be heard. Norwegian youth organizations were in favour of launching of the United Nations initiative for a global structure to improve communication between youth non-governmental organizations and the Organization.

21. Today's youth was impatient: there were too many resolutions and not enough action on such pressing issues as the widening gap between rich and poor, the growing number of refugees and looming environmental problems. Young people were particularly concerned about the danger of global warming, the extinction of many species, and air and water pollution. Environmental problems could even lead to military conflict. Priority was given to the production of military weapons, whereas insufficient resources were set aside to address environmental issues. The 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development must direct its efforts to securing sustainable growth and drafting international environmental law. Environmental issues could not, however, be resolved without reducing the gap between North and South or tackling the debt crisis.

22. Young people were particularly concerned about the impact of alcohol and narcotic drugs in the third world. She supported the recommendation of the World Health Organization to reduce total alcohol consumption by 25 per cent by the year 2000 and also subscribed to its programme to combat substance abuse.

23. Mr. MAIER (Austria) said that, although the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons would be ending in December, its work must continue. It had provided the incentive for numerous programmes of action concerning disabled persons, which had improved living conditions particularly for people with impaired hearing. An example of successful action was the so-called "Transversale Graz-Portoroz" (the bicycle marathon for hearing-impaired cyclists) carried out under United Nations patronage.

24. At the previous session, he had spoken of the disadvantages faced by the hard of hearing. Communication and access to information, education and knowledge was often impossible without visual means. Increasing international interest in sign language might well be due to increasing recognition of the rights of minorities. Sign language was a source and a tool of the culture of the deaf. It should also be part of everyday media. It was currently being examined in scientific centres in Austria and most other European countries, and with United Nations support, Austria had increased the number of television broadcasts with subtitles and sign language. He urged Governments to recognize the need for sign language to be accepted as an independent language and integrated in the education of deaf people, and to call for its increased use in television.

(Mr. Maier, Austria)

25. Early diagnosis of hearing impairment and subsequent therapy were essential to prevent communication disability. Hearing checks for babies should be compulsory. The suicide of an Austrian sculptor who had believed that his deafness was incurable had brought out the need for support and led to the establishment of an institution for general medical support with a general practitioner trained in sign language and communication with people who were hard of hearing.

26. Lastly, he stressed that all acoustic danger and emergency signals should be produced in visual form as well. He urged all Governments, as a matter of the highest priority, to work closely with associations of disabled persons and reinforce their efforts to overcome barriers.

27. Mr. SIGURDSEN (Iceland), speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries, stressed the need to give greater attention to social issues. The improved international political climate provided a unique opportunity to enhance the role of the United Nations in promoting economic and social development. The Nordic countries welcomed the growing recognition of the vital relationship between democracy, human rights and sustainable development. During the past decade, the economic and social situation in most developing countries had deteriorated. More than a billion people, the majority of them women and children, lived in absolute poverty. Economic growth was necessary to reduce the number of poor people, and there was a need to distribute wealth equitably and improve general living conditions. Sustainable development and protection of the environment and natural resources were essential aspects of social development, which must be taken into account in all future planning in that field.

28. The advancement of equality between men and women was a cornerstone of social development. Education should be given higher priority as a development objective and a means to promote better health and economic growth and improve social conditions in general. Literacy programmes for women and girls deserved the highest priority since that would lead to better family planning and foster economic and social development. Teaching mothers to read was a stepping-stone towards literacy of the entire family. The Nordic countries had welcomed the entry into force of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and advocated further action to achieve the goals laid down at the World Summit for Children. Young people were the key to future progress and human resources development. Education, cultural development and good living conditions for youth were of utmost importance. More effective action to combat drug abuse and the spread of AIDS was also a vital issue.

29. The contribution by elderly people to social development was often given less attention than it deserved. The International Plan of Action on Ageing, regrettably, had been poorly implemented. It was necessary to review the progress made and take new steps on the basis of that assessment. As the United Nations prepared for the 1994 International Year of the Family, the Nordic countries considered it important to give adequate attention to the

(Mr. Sigurdssen, Iceland)

changing structure of the family, single-parent families, and equality between men and women and their changing roles in the family.

30. The dramatic increase in the drug problem around the world posed a serious threat to economic and social development in many countries. The important steps taken in recent years to combat drug abuse had encouraged Governments to intensify their efforts at the national level and had helped strengthen global programmes.

31. As the end of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons approached, there was a need to assess what had been accomplished. The Decade and the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons had increased awareness of the needs of disabled people, especially in developing countries. Nevertheless, the implementation of the World Programme had been disappointing. Although special solutions designed specifically for the disabled were often useful and necessary, integrated solutions aimed at equalization of opportunities were of primary importance. The United Nations and Governments had an important part to play in promoting the role of the disabled in social development. Accordingly, there was a need to strengthen the Disabled Persons Unit in the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs.

32. The Nordic countries had welcomed the establishment of an ad hoc working group by the Commission for Social Development in order to elaborate standard rules on the equalization of opportunities for disabled people, and hoped that the group would complete its work so that the Commission could consider the rules at its session in 1993.

33. Referring to the Secretary-General's interim report on the world social situation (A/46/56-E/1991/6), he drew attention to the difficulties inherent in making international comparisons of expenditures on social services. In view of the need to take into account the different measures applied by countries, it was necessary to develop systems that provided comparable information on the methods of delivering social services. Economic and Social Council decision 1991/230 requested the Secretary-General to consult Member States on the possibility of convening a world summit for social development. The Nordic countries expressed their desire to cooperate constructively with the Secretary-General in that regard.

34. Mrs. SHERMAN-PETER (Bahamas) stressed that development had both economic and social dimensions, which were critically linked. The capacity of numerous countries, particularly in the developing world, to attain social objectives had been adversely affected by the international economic situation. Debt, structural adjustments and poverty were eroding many of the gains made. In its response, the international community must analyse and address the social implications of international economic development and place greater emphasis on social development issues, including the development of indicators to identify social trends, particularly in the developing world.

(Mrs. Sherman-Peter, Bahamas)

35. Emphasis on social development should encourage a more thorough evaluation of the possibilities for improving social conditions through the Guiding Principles for Developmental Social Welfare policies and programmes in the near future (A/46/414). Efforts to enhance prospects for implementing the Principles through regional cooperation had already yielded results. Contacts were being made for a regional conference on the implementation of the Principles in Latin America and the Caribbean.

36. There was a need to forge ahead in efforts to address the issues affecting youth, the disabled and the elderly. Although more had been done to integrate young people into development, the situation of youth was far from satisfactory. Reduced social and economic resources, especially in developing countries, limited the opportunities available to young people. Youth unemployment and underemployment continued to increase. The Bahamas had identified education as a principal vehicle for approaching youth employment problems and facilitating the integration of young people into development. Considerable emphasis was placed on designing meaningful school curricula and teaching technical, vocational and professional skills. Direct job experience was stressed and information about career choices and the job market was provided.

37. Her Government had taken a number of measures to promote entrepreneurship and self-employment on the part of young people. There were plans to establish a youth venture-capital loan fund for young entrepreneurs and a National Small Business Advisory Council had been established to advise youth. The Bahamas followed innovative approaches to promote the involvement of youth in voluntary service, health care, the media, sports and leisure activities.

38. The development of new patterns of cooperation to help the disabled was one of the major accomplishments of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons. In her country, the Decade had given impetus to efforts to remove obstacles to equalization of opportunity and to set up a national support system. The Bahamas had recently established a Desk for the Disabled in the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Community Affairs.

39. By the year 2025, 70 per cent of persons over the age of 60 would be living in developing countries. Research, care, and ways of integrating the elderly into development must be considered global priorities. Her delegation was impressed by the pace of preparations for the 1994 International Year of the Family. Much could be accomplished by the system-wide cooperation made possible by the identification of focal points in United Nations bodies. The International Year would provide the opportunity for focusing on the family and prospects for progress on a wider range of social issues. A fuller understanding of new family structures, including dual-career families and single-parent families, should be gained. Fostering the development of each individual within the family should have positive implications for the advancement of women. The issues of disability and ageing, and deviant

(Mrs. Sherman-Peter, Bahamas)

behaviour, including violence against women, juvenile delinquency and drug abuse, could all be addressed in the context of the Year.

40. The Bahamas had recently established a National Commission on the Family. The Commission was in the process of reviewing family-related matters and would provide direction for the national programme of activities for the International Year of the Family. Lastly, she emphasized the contradiction in expanding the mandate of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs while at the same time decreasing its resources. Member States must take steps to solve the Centre's urgent problem in that regard so that it could carry out its work effectively.

41. Mr. AL-THANI (Qatar) said that his Government accorded the greatest importance to the welfare of young people and thereby expressed its conviction that the rising generation was vital to the future progress of the country. It had recently expanded its social welfare agencies for youth and had established a new agency for youth and sports in order to encourage the participation of young people in activities of benefit to themselves and their society. The new agency reflected increased interest in the lives of young people and in promoting cooperation and mutual understanding. Cultural associations and sports clubs had been established to coordinate youth activities and to draw up the necessary plans for the expansion of facilities. Youth leaders were undergoing training and facilities had been constructed for the reception of young persons from other countries. The technical and financial assistance provided to sports clubs, the Qatar Red Crescent Club and the Qatar Sports Association had been increased.

42. The activities undertaken had also included informational and cultural projects to encourage young people to participate in intellectual life, to take part in international festivals and to organize lectures and seminars. There had been numerous initiatives in the arts, the theater and music aimed at encouraging young people to participate actively. A Qatar Olympic Committee had been established in order to provide technical assistance to sporting associations, and it had participated in international and regional activities and in meetings of the International Olympic Committee.

43. Qatar followed with interest the activities of the United Nations Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs and was always ready to cooperate in the implementation of General Assembly resolutions relating to social matters. It looked forward to participating in the tenth anniversary of International Youth Year in 1995, which would provide an appropriate opportunity for focusing attention on an essential element of society in the light of changing economic and political circumstances and the impact of those changes on youth and on the organizations that served it.

44. Matters relating to youth were becoming extremely important at the international level because of lethal epidemics and social problems to which there were no quick solutions. International planning, cooperation and

(Mr. Al-Thani, Qatar)

preparation for the future were therefore essential. Qatar supported in full measure the plans being made by the specialized agencies of the United Nations to encourage the activities of young people and to address their problems and overcome the obstacles to the development of modalities to promote their emergence as a useful element for their societies and for the international community as a whole.

45. Miss BOTERO (Colombia), speaking also on behalf of Mexico and Venezuela, said that one of the lessons of the past decade was that the economic and social aspects of development were indivisible. The international community must take a broader view of development, recognizing its "human face" and realizing that there could be no economic progress without a sound social base.

46. Despite the new era of cooperation and conciliation between East and West, there were no grounds for optimism. Poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, lack of health care and proper education still prevailed in many developing countries. The burden of foreign debt and its servicing had increased; and environmental problems, crime, drug abuse and illicit trafficking were still matters of serious concern.

47. She was concerned that the interim report on the world social situation (A/46/56-E/1991/6) did not fully reflect the guidelines set by the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. For example, the analysis of the main indicators of social progress and standards of living had been far more comprehensive in respect of certain countries, particularly those in transition from a centrally-planned to a market economy.

48. In selecting issues and trends, the report had focused on two main aspects: institutional changes and social services. In the case of the former, her delegation considered that the scope was somewhat limited. While the changes in the Soviet Union and the Eastern European countries had been profound and merited examination and evaluation, there had been radical political and economic changes in the developing countries, too, which called for more detailed analysis. In Latin America, for example, countries were moving towards an open economy, dismantling tariff barriers and embarking on privatization.

49. The report also failed to link the questions of the environment, drug abuse, illicit trafficking, and disarmament with current economic and social conditions. She hoped that the next report would bring out the link more clearly. Drug abuse was not exclusively a problem of health and crime prevention. It was a global problem with different manifestations and required integral, multidisciplinary treatment. As for the environment, the report should have been more explicit on the interrelationship between environmental degradation and poverty.

50. Although the Gulf War had temporarily diverted attention, the "peace dividend" had not disappeared. Its full realization depended on progress

(Miss Botero, Colombia)

towards a viable peace and a world in which disputes between nations were not settled by arms and where armed forces were reduced to the minimum. In that connection she stressed the importance of the chapters on the role of government and on expenditure on social services.

51. Lastly, she felt that the end-notes to the report were somewhat haphazard. For example, there were many references to private or media sources, but hardly any to reports of specialized agencies.

52. With regard to the future, the 1993 Report on the World Social Situation should have the objective, realistic, balanced and global approach needed for an effective analysis of the world social situation and should fully reflect the international economic and social trends and the situation of the developing countries. It would be useful to have an opening chapter giving a global view of social problems in the context of economic conditions. Items 10 and 14 of the draft framework, on social change in the global context and on new challenges to social security policies respectively, could be considered as introductory chapters to the report, and be followed by an analysis of world social parameters and issues such as the environment, drugs and communication. Such reports would help towards effective measures for solving problems. In that connection, Economic and Social Council decision 1991/230 on the possibility of convening a world summit for social development was extremely important and she urged the Secretary-General to continue his consultations.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

53. Mr. RAVEN (United Kingdom) said that earlier in the session he had raised the question of the Secretary-General's report on enhancement of the United Nations structure for drug abuse control (A/46/480), as requested in General Assembly resolution 45/179, and had asked for it to be issued in good time for consideration by Member States before the debate on item 96 (Narcotic drugs). The report had not yet been issued but the debate was due to start on 30 October. His delegation accordingly wished, through the Chairman, to request the Secretariat to inform the Committee at the next meeting of the status of the report.

54. The CHAIRMAN replied that he had communicated with the President of the General Assembly and that the Secretariat had assured him that the report would be issued on 29 October. He was still waiting for information on the other documents.

The meeting rose at 5.10 p.m.